University of Alberta

Holding the Tension in the Sphere of the Between: French immersion graduates in a Francophone post-secondary institution

by

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©

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ABSTRACT

This research is a qualitative interpretive case study that explored the experiences of French immersion graduates who were studying in the department of education at the Campus Saint-Jean, a Francophone post-secondary institution at the University of Alberta. An important goal of the study was to understand why Anglophone students, who had spent 13 years in French immersion programs, often chose to communicate in English rather than in French when at the CSJ, an institution where there is an expectation that all students will speak in French.

Using a hermeneutic approach, data were gathered through participant interviews, document analysis, field notes and participant journals. Grounded in Buber's (1966) philosophical anthropology, Friedman's (1983) concepts of communities of 'affinity' and of 'otherness', as well as Lugones (2003) four criteria of at-easeness, the study sought to understand how the transition from one type of community (French immersion) to another (CSJ), might impact upon students' choice to use their mother tongue and not their second language at CSJ.

The findings of the study took the form of a theoretical model, illustrating how both the French immersion context and the Campus Saint-Jean could be understood as 'communities based in like-mindedness and affinity' rather than in 'otherness'. It was shown that two different communities of 'affinity' do not co-exist easily in the same institution, and that dissonances between these communities have an impact upon participants' feelings of at-easeness in the French language.

Lastly, as an interpretive scholar, I confronted the pre-conceptions I had about French immersion graduates attending the CSJ. Through traveling the loops of a

hermeneutic spiral, I was able to transform many of my pre-conceptions, and gain insight into what makes the French immersion students unique. As a result, I recommend that staff and students at CSJ make an effort to engage what Buber called, 'the sphere of the between', which ultimately might lead to a CSJ community based in 'otherness' rather than in 'affinity'.

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Dedication

To Claude P. without whom I
never would have travelled so far.

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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

If I just do my thing and you do yours, we stand in danger of losing each other and ourselves. I am not in this world to live up to your expectations; but I am in this world to confirm you as a unique human being, and to be confirmed by you. We are fully ourselves only in relation to each other; the I detached from a Thou disintegrates. I do not find you by chance; I find you by an active life of reaching out. Rather than passively letting things happen to me, I can act intentionally to make them happen. I must begin with myself, true; but I must not end with myself: the truth begins between the two.

Walter Tubbs (1972)

Presenting the Study

This is an interpretive case study that explores the experiences of students who graduate from French immersion programs (K-12) and go on to pursue post-secondary studies in the Department of Education at the Campus Saint-Jean (CSJ), a Francophone institution at the University of Alberta, in Edmonton, Canada. In this study, I explore the challenges these students encounter as they attempt to become part of the new Francophone community at CSJ. More specifically, I seek to understand why it is that French Immersion graduates often choose to speak in English at the CSJ when the institutional expectation is that they will speak French. The growing Anglophone student population, which has led to this increased use of English at CSJ, is worrisome for all those who want to keep the Francophone nature of this institution alive and thriving. In this study I construct the argument that both the French immersion context and the Francophone context of CSJ can be understood as 'communities of *affinity*' (Friedman,

1983) or places where likeminded people gather (Friedman, 1983). Those who find themselves in a community of affinity oftentimes use similar language(s), agree to follow certain norms of behaviour established by the community (written and non-written), have shared histories and seek out those that are most like them and with whom they like to spend time (Lugones, 2003). When people come from *different* affinity groups and attempt to live under the same roof with each other, the different assumptions they hold about language, about normative structures, about people and their particular stories, and sometimes even about life itself, can bump up against each other, making it difficult to accept the other. Not unlike an organ transplant in the human body, the risk of rejection is always high as the body recognizes the organ as *different* from itself. Like the transplant, attempting to meld two communities of affinity is a difficult process.

In this study, I discuss the challenges students experience as they move from one type of community of affinity (French immersion) and attempt to gain access to a new community of affinity such as the one at CSJ. While there has been research that deals with the subject of "access" to second language (L2) communities (Dunn, 2002; McKay & Wong, 1996; Norton, 2000; Norton Pierce, 1993; 1995; Pavlenko & Lantolf, 2000; Polyani, 1995; Siegal, 1994, 1995, 1996; Traphagan, 1999; Trosset, 1986), in this study, access or lack thereof, is dealt with implicitly rather than explicitly by considering how the different underlying assumptions held by the Francophones and the French immersion students bring about tensions that may be keeping the two apart. As a resolution to this distancing I discuss the possibility of CSJ moving in the direction of a community of *otherness* (Friedman, 1983), which could result in greater understanding and empathy between the two groups. Using a hermeneutic interpretive approach, I also explore the

assumptions that I held about the French immersion students before I began this study (positioned as a Francophone who has been at CSJ for more than twenty years). I go on to explain how my assumptions about French immersion students were transformed through the hermeneutic process of entering Buber's sphere of the 'between' (Buber, 1965; Buber, 1967) with the participants that I interviewed for this study. Engaging in authentic dialogue with them enabled me to test my assumptions against their actual lived realities at CSJ. In doing so, I came away with a much deeper understanding of who they are rather than who I imagined them to be.

It is my hope that those reading this study will also come away with a deeper understanding of the experience of French immersion students who struggle to pursue their second language in an institution that has different expectations and lived histories than the ones they were used to in their previous context.

Coming to the Question

At the age of 18, I moved to Edmonton Alberta, from a small Northern Ontario town where I attended a Francophone school from grades K-13. Upon my arrival in Edmonton, I was thrilled to discover the Faculté Saint-Jean (now Campus Saint-Jean), a post-secondary Francophone institution at the University of Alberta. In 1983 I began my first degree, a Bachelor of Arts in Sociology with a minor in French. These were years where I became part of a Francophone community away from home. I lived in the old residence, on site, at Saint-Jean where I made many friends. During these years, the student population consisted mostly of Quebecois, Francophones from other provinces, and a small group of international students who came from French speaking countries. There were very few Anglophones at Saint-Jean at this point in time, and for the most

part, daily life was lived in French. I remember FSJ in those years as a very social place. We spent a great deal of time sitting in a circle in the student lounge, socializing with our friends. Few English words were spoken on site as the Quebecois influence was strong. Oftentimes the professors would also drop in to sit and talk with us in our gathered circle. It was a wonderful time. In fact, I was having such a great time that once I finished my first degree, I decided to undertake an 'after degree' BEd in Education and become a French teacher. I completed this degree in 1990 and began working as a French immersion teacher for Edmonton Catholic Schools. I also had the opportunity to work in a Francophone school, before they separated from the Catholic board and were granted their own school board.

In 1996, I returned to FSJ to begin a Masters' degree in *Language and Culture*. At this time, I noticed that things were somewhat different than when I had studied for my first two degrees. There didn't seem to be quite as much collegiality in the hallways or in the students' lounge. But as I was busy, I didn't give it much thought. Eight years later, in 2004, I began teaching courses at FSJ and I immediately noticed how much things had changed. I heard a great deal of English spoken everywhere. What surprised me most was the fact that many students didn't even switch to French when I, as an instructor, was near them. In the washroom, girls laughed and spoke in English while applying their makeup, glancing furtively at me in the mirror. Some students even spoke English in my classes. How could this be happening? This was supposed to be a Francophone institution – had someone forgotten to tell these students? I soon found out that one of the reasons for all these changes was that, with the success of French immersion programs across Canada, much of FSJ's student population now consisted of graduates from these

programs – in fact by 2004 second language students made up 60% of the total student population. In other words, FSJ was now made up of more Anglophones than Francophones, which explained in great part all the linguistic changes that had taken place over the previous 20 years. I wondered if, with so many students speaking in English, FSJ might be at risk of losing its Francophone identity. I also wondered why these students would come to FSJ if they weren't prepared to speak in French. I was sure they must be aware that by coming to this institution they would be 'expected' to speak and live in French as much as possible. So what was happening here?

I began paying closer attention to this problem in the classes I taught. At one point, I asked my students, "If it can be said that language, culture and identity (as understood in the postmodern sense) cannot be separated, what can we say about those in the French immersion program? Do you have an identity, other than simply an Anglophone one, since you've been learning French for 12 or 13 years?" For the most part, the French immersion students believed that, yes, they did have an identity that was 'other' than simply an Anglophone one, but they agreed that it was not a Francophone identity either. They were quite clear about what they were <u>not,</u> but less clear on what they were. When I raised the issue of identity, the interesting thing that happened was that it opened the floodgates for those from French immersion programs to begin to tell their stories. It was as if they couldn't believe we were actually talking about issues that pertained to them, and not the usual difficulties that Francophones encounter when living in minority situations. This, of course is not unusual since the courses at Saint-Jean were constructed for a population that was made up mostly of Francophones. It was at this point that it dawned on me that in most of my courses students from second language

programs such as French immersion, rarely if ever spoke in class. Even if there were only a few Francophones and Quebecois in the group, they were the ones who did most of the talking, while the second language students sat and listened but rarely said a word. Upon much reflection I decided to purposely try to increase the involvement of these students in discussions. I asked explicit questions about their experiences as second language learners which forced them to speak up and to begin to find voice. I began to detect certain patterns in their stories – not only were many of them reticent to participate in class discussions but almost all were quick to apologize for their lack of proficiency in the French language. Some began to speak of feeling completely unprepared to participate in a Francophone context such as the one at FSJ and felt overwhelmed at the new situation in which they now found themselves. This was somewhat surprising to me since these students had spent the last twelve or thirteen years immersed in their second language but still didn't seem confident to speak in it. It seemed to me that while their level of linguistic proficiency in French may have served them well in the homogeneous context of a French immersion classroom, it did not seem to enable them to *live* and *participate* in French in this new community.

I came to realize that coming into a Francophone environment from a second language environment presents unique challenges both for the French immersion graduates as well as for the institution itself. Because of my deep attachment and commitment to what is now called Campus Saint-Jean (CSJ), I decided that it was important to try to understand why the second language students were choosing to speak in English rather than in French. I hoped that this understanding might bring to light some

ways of encouraging and helping the second language students feel more at ease in using French and at the same time assure the continued identity and culture of CSJ.

Research Purpose

At the time of this study, it seemed to me that Campus Saint-Jean marched on stoically as a Francophone institution, unsure of what to do with so much English spoken inside of its walls. Some of us, I think, tried to turn a blind eye to what was happening while others were angered by the situation but did not know what to do about it. At the beginning of this research project, I was in the second group. I felt insulted that the French immersion students did not even blink when I walked by and they were speaking in English to each other. I would glare at them as I complained to my colleagues about their behaviour and although many of my colleagues felt as I did, no one had any real solutions to the problem. Upon serious reflection, I felt compelled to move beyond the assumptions I held about these students', by undertaking the present study. Here I wanted to ask the French immersion graduates why they were making the choice to use English, rather than simply assuming that I knew their real intentions behind these choices.

To summarize then, the overall purpose of this study was to understand why those who graduate from French immersion programs and have the ability to speak French choose not to do so once they are in a Francophone postsecondary institution where the expectation is that they will and should use their second language in their interactions and coursework. Although I sought to understand why these students were making the personal decision to use English rather than French, I strongly suspected that there were also larger underlying factors that were impacting upon the students' choices. It seemed to me that how they had lived in their French immersion community was not at all the

way they were called to live in the new community at CSJ. Since much of the academic research done in French immersion up until now, has dealt mostly with cognitive and linguistic issues of second language learning, I saw the need to expand upon this framework by going beyond the individual to the communities in which these second language learners were called to live in. In this study, this meant looking at their previous French immersion community as well as the new one they were entering at the CSJ. This expanding outwards to the greater world corresponds to the stated goal of qualitative research in the 'seventh moment' which "asks that the social sciences and the humanities become sites for critical conversations about democracy, race, gender, class, nation-states, globalization, freedom, and community" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003, p.3).

Research Questions

The following research question guided this study:

1. What are the experiences of French immersion graduates as they move from the French immersion community to the Francophone postsecondary community at the Campus Saint-Jean?

The following sub-questions emerged:

1. Why do graduates from French immersion programs choose to speak in English rather than in French when they find themselves in a Francophone postsecondary institution like the one at the Campus Saint-Jean, where the historical expectation has been that students there will speak and live in French?

2. What type of community is a French immersion school, as understood by those who studied there for 12 or 13 years? How is this community one of affinity and not one of otherness?

3. How is Campus Saint-Jean its own community of affinity and not one of otherness? How does this construction inhibit the French immersion students' use of the French language on this Francophone landscape?

4. How might Friedman's notion of a *community of otherness* allow French immersion students to participate more fully in the French language on this new landscape?

Description of the Research

This qualitative case study was situated within a constructivist, interpretive, hermeneutic, naturalistic paradigm. A case study design was well suited to my research concerns since I was looking at a single entity – the experience of French Immersion graduates in a particular setting (the Campus Saint-Jean) – which can be considered a "unit around which there are boundaries" (Merriam, 1998, p. 27). There were three participants in this study all of whom graduated from a (K-12) French immersion program and who now attended Campus Saint-Jean. Data collection consisted of individual interviews, field notes and a research journal that I kept, as well as pre-interview activities that participants brought with them to the interviews. Three interviews with each participant were conducted in a conversational mode where participants shared their narratives of experience at Campus Saint-Jean. Data were collected and interpreted using Ellis' (1998) notion of the hermeneutic spiral and van Manen's (1997) thematic analysis. All interviews were conducted in French and all

excerpts used in this study are first presented in French and are followed by an English translation. The study was conducted from June 2005 to December 2005.

Definitions of French Language Programs in Alberta

French First Language

- Education is offered entirely in French from Kindergarten through Grade 12.
- School environment, programming and extracurricular activities provide the child with a solid and dynamic focal point for the French language and Francophone culture as an extension of family and community life.

French Immersion

- French is used as the language of instruction for a significant part of each school day: several or all subjects are taught in French. Children in this program receive approximately 300 minutes of English Language Arts instruction per week.
- Begins with a period of concentration on French language development to give students a sufficient understanding of French in order to learn to read and to learn other subjects such as math, science, social studies, fine arts, etc. taught in French.
- This program is designed for students whose first language is not French. The objective is full mastery of the English language, functional fluency in French, as well as an understanding and appreciation of the French culture.
- **Early immersion** refers to a program beginning in Kindergarten or Grade 1.
- **Middle immersion** refers to a program beginning in Grade 4 or Grade 5.
- **Late immersion** refers to a program beginning in Grade 6 or later.

Core French Programs

French is taught as a subject (Alberta Education recommends 30 – 40 minutes of instruction per day).

- French is used as the language of classroom communication.
- French knowledge skills are developed through the use of themes and projects geared to the interests, maturity, and life experiences of the child.
- In schools where it is offered, core French (often referred to in Alberta as 'FSL' or French as a Second Language programs) usually begin in Grade 4, 7, or 10. In some schools it begins as early as Kindergarten or Grade 1.
- In some schools all students study core French at certain grade levels (typically 4-6 or Grades 7-9).

Overview of the Dissertation

In Chapter Two of the dissertation, I present a historical overview of the French immersion and Francophone programs as well as the history of the Campus Saint-Jean. Here, I discuss the goals and philosophies, as well as the political histories and influences, in which both are embedded. In Chapter Three, I outline Buber's (1965) philosophical anthropology and existential thinking, where notions of *the sphere of the between*, *dialogue*, *uniqueness*, *confirmation* and *communities of affinity* and *otherness* are presented as the frame in which I situate this study. In addition, I outline Lugones' (2003) four criteria of at-easeness which I apply to both F. I. and CSJ contexts in Chapter Five to construct the argument that both are communities of 'affinity' rather than ones of 'otherness.' In Chapter Four, I describe the research approach of phenomenological-

hermeneutics where lived experience descriptions are collected as data and then analyzed using a Gadamerian interpretive model. In this chapter, I also suggest appropriate evaluation criteria with which this type of qualitative study can best be judged. In Chapter Five, I apply Lugones' (2003) *four criteria of at-easeness* to the data gathered in interviews with participants, to the French immersion context in order to construct it as a theoretical model of Friedman's community of affinity. In Chapter Six, I follow the same process applying Lugones' four criteria of at-easeness to data that emerged from a documentary analysis (history of the FSJ presented in Chapter Two) as well as to data gathered through interviews in order to construct the second part of the theoretical model – the FSJ as a community of affinity. The completed model demonstrates how both of these contexts are constructed (linguistically, normatively, relationally and historically) in very different ways. In Chapter Seven I discuss the consequences of these dissonant constructions for students arriving from the French immersion program. Here, I reflect on the French immersion context (as my participants reflect back on their experiences there) and discuss the struggles they live today when trying to use their second language in a Francophone context like the one at the CSJ. I make suggestions that may help with this transition. In Chapter Eight, I tackle the pre-conceptions that I held about French immersion students at the CSJ (identified in Chapter Four) in order to show how these were transformed by getting to know my participants as they truly are and not as I believed them to be. Seven themes are presented and illustrate how it is possible to *(re)imagine* the Campus Saint-Jean as a *community of otherness* (Friedman, 1983) when we are able to move past assumptions and in order to see students as unique individuals and not as part of a category. I reflect on how I believe it is possible (albeit not easy) to

live with those unlike ourselves while not losing our own Francophone nature in the process. I then suggest that the community of otherness, rather than one based in affinity and like-mindedness, can help second language students take risks in speaking in their second language when they move from one community to the other. In Chapter Nine, implications of this research for both the French immersion and Francophone contexts at CSJ are discussed along with suggestions for the need for further research in this area.

CHAPTER TWO

FRENCH IMMERSION EDUCATION IN ALBERTA AND THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF THE FACULTÉ SAINT-JEAN

Introduction

This chapter is divided into two parts. In the first, I review the research pertaining to French immersion education in Canada, as well as discuss studies that have shown the positive and less than positive aspects of such programs. I also briefly introduce some studies that discuss the benefits as well as the drawbacks of having French immersion graduates studying alongside Francophone ones in a Francophone university setting.

In the second part of the chapter, I present a historical 'storying' of Faculté Saint-Jean (I use FSJ here as this was its name during the period I am speaking about). Although this institution is living many changes today, I explore how historically it has long attempted to reach the 'ideal' of what a Francophone institution could be.

French Immersion Education in Canada

Prior to the 1960s, studies from both the United Kingdom and the United States tended to report that students schooled in one language had better achievement results than students schooled in bilingual programs. Some of these studies claimed that studying in two languages could be detrimental to the intellectual development of the individual (Darcy, 1953; Haugen, 1956). This view began to change when researchers such as Lambert (1974), Cummins and Gulutsan (1974), Cummins, (1978) and Genesee (1984; 1987) began studying the new French immersion programs in Canada, and found that

bilingual students actually demonstrated a cognitive and meta-linguistic advantage over their unilingual counterparts.

French Immersion Programs

French immersion programs began in Canada in 1965 when a group of Anglophone parents in St. Lambert, Quebec, proposed that their children be taught all subject areas in French so that they might learn to function in this second language while in school. This was a new and revolutionary concept. Many people were skeptical about a program that would teach children mathematics and science skills in a language they were in the process of learning. Nonetheless, this program grew and caught the attention of parents and educators in other parts of the country (Edwards, 1989). Soon, immersion programs were being implemented throughout the country and carefully controlled studies (Lambert & Tucker, 1972; Lambert, 1977; Genesee, 1976; Swain, 1978; Swain & Lapkin, 1982; Cummins, 1978; 1979; 1981; 1984; 1987; Cummins & Swain, 1986) showed that French immersion students achieved a form of 'additive bilingualism' through the learning of the two languages. As a result, many parents and educators became convinced that immersion programs could in fact be successful.

Today the benefits of French immersion programs have been widely documented (D'Anglejan & Tucker, 1971; Lambert, Tucker & D'Anglejan, 1973; Rogers, 1976; Lambert, 1974; 1977; Genesee & Stanley, 1976; Conners, Ménard & Singh, 1978; Swain, 1974; 1976; 1978; 1984; Swain & Lapkin; 1981; Hylton, 1982; Genesee, 1987; Morrison & Pawley, 1983; Sweetman, Leblanc & Lawton, 1975) with many studies finding that, "bilingual children have a verbal and a non-verbal advantage over monolingual children and that their intelligence, concept formation and mental flexibility are favorably affected

by their bilingualism" (Mannavarayan, 2002, p. 27; Ouellet, 1990). There is little doubt that French immersion programs as a whole have been incredible success stories. In fact, French immersion has *literally* been sold as "the great Canadian success story" (Hayden, 1988) as well as portrayed as *"The Trial Balloon that Flew"* (Lapkin, Swain & Argue, 1983). Today, French immersion is one of the most intensely researched and evaluated programs in education (Canadian Education Association, 1992, p.2).

Cognitive Orientations in French Immersion Research

Although most studies conducted on French immersion programs have consistently shown the positive effects of the programs, it is important to note that most have been cognitively and linguistically oriented. As Tassone (2001) states, "in the late 1980s, most research [tended] to accentuate outcomes rather than process or understanding the complexities of the experiences of life as an immersion student" (p.2). This research trend was reinforced when many researchers who, up until the early 1980s, had focused their research on French immersion in Canada, joined the larger field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) and Bilingual Studies taking place for the most part in the United States. French immersion researchers, working under this new theoretical umbrella, continued to publish outcome-oriented studies under the influence of the SLA framework which had long focused on "discrete grammatical, morphological, or phonological elements in the interlanguage…with data typically gathered from L2 learners in artificial settings" (Tarone, 2000, p. 182). This tendency often completely excluded the more experiential and contextual aspects of language learning. As Tardif and Weber (1987) noted:

> while the body of literature on second language acquisition and bilingual education is large, many of the studies are theoretical in nature and many do not focus specifically on the French immersion school experience…[and] although there have been some calls for more qualitative studies of the French immersion classroom, with some exceptions, such studies have not generally been forthcoming. (p.69)

Even today there is a lack of qualitative contextualized studies in much of the research completed in SLA where:

> tightly controlled studies are designed to identify particular grammatical features to be acquired and explore the impact of various cognitive factors on the acquisition process…and set out to establish some clear causes for the acquisition or fossilization of very specific phonological and grammatical features of the L2. And since, in such studies, the social context is greatly controlled or reduced in complexity, and is usually fairly similar across university studies, such researchers have assumed that social factors are irrelevant to their work. (Tarone, 2000, p.186)

As Tarone implies, the abundance of experimental linguistically based studies can be attributed to the many psycholinguists working in the area of SLA who have denied the role played by context in L2 acquisition. As Freeman and Johnson (1998) note, "due perhaps to its roots in L1 acquisition and cognitive psychology, the field of SLA has viewed [much of] language learning from an individualist perspective" (p.411). Over the last few years this has in fact become one of the most heated and contested issues for sociolinguists and co-constructionist oriented researchers working in SLA, who argue for

the importance of "attempting to identify the role of social context in influencing (or not) the process of acquisition of a second language" (Tarone, 2000, p.182). Firth and Wagner (1997) have adamantly stated that:

> SLA research takes a view of the learner that is too individualistic and mechanistic, and…fails to account in a satisfactory way for interactional and sociolinguistic dimensions of language. As such, it is flawed, and obviates insight into the nature of language, most centrally the language use of second or foreign language speakers. (p.285)

Despite this type of outcry, issues of context "remain relatively unmentioned by mainstream SLA researchers with a psycholinguistic orientation even today" (Tarone, 2000, p.185). This situation has in a sense limited research done both in the larger field of SLA as well as in French immersion education.

To summarize this section, there has been little research done in the last 25 years that would dissuade parents from enrolling their children in French immersion schools. They have been told that not only would their children benefit cognitively but that "immersion education will lead to a functional bilingualism, allowing students to feel comfortable expressing themselves in the second language in all types of situations (school, work, play)" (Mannavarayan, 2002, p. 33). Much of this research has been limited to the linguistic and cognitive dimensions of learning a second language, with few researchers exploring the more experiential side of L2 learning.

The Social Turn in SLA and French Immersion Research

It should be noted that even though most SLA studies have been cognitively based, there was some research as far back as the 1980s that addressed some of the social aspects of second language learning in French immersion settings. These early studies did not always show the French immersion program in a very positive light. As Makropoulos (1998) noted, "research published from the eighties onward…became more critical as many findings suggested that French-language skills of immersion students were not entirely adequate" (p.7). Adviv (1980) and Spilka (1976) were among the first to find that students in French immersion programs possessed a faulty linguistic system. Bibeau (1984) claimed that immersion students often used a non-standard French dialect that tended to fossilize at an early age. Researchers such as Bibeau (1984), Lyster (1987), Webster (1986) and Hammerly (1989) came to the conclusion that the goal of attaining a functional bilingualism was not reached by most students in French immersion classrooms. Webster (1986) stated that, "in terms of French proficiency, these students are only able to satisfy limited social and work needs in that language," while Lyster (1987) suggested that those in French immersion:

> have difficulty understanding films and… struggle with novels intended for young Francophones. Their socio-linguistic competence is not well developed either and if they are able to communicate meaning, it is done with little grammatical accuracy. In short, they 'speak immersion'. (p. 703)

Lyster (1987) went on to explain the notion of 'speaking immersion' in the following way:

> Errors in the spoken French of immersion students, reflecting a fossilized interlanguage and language transfer are attributed to an erroneous assumption underlying immersion instruction: that students acquire the second language in the same way they acquire their native language. An improved syllabus aimed at second-language learners is recommended. (p. 701)

Interestingly, perhaps due to the tendency in SLA research to dismiss more qualitative and contextualized studies, these notions were not greatly pursued in the 1980s. But with what Gee (2000) has called, the "massive 'social turn' [in L2 research] away from a focus on individual behavior…and individual minds…toward a focus on social and cultural interaction" (p. 180), qualitative and contextualized studies have become more relevant today. Hence, in the new millennium, a greater number of sociolinguistic and constructivist oriented studies are being conducted in SLA, as well as studies that look at the more socio-cultural and socio-political aspects of learning a second language. As Ohta (2000) notes, "there is a growing interest among teachers and researchers in understanding how language development occurs through situated interaction, not in laboratories, but in classrooms, tutoring sessions and other teaching-learning settings" (p.51). Trends are showing a shift from a strictly linguistic-based paradigm to a socio-cultural one where learning a second language is seen not simply, "as the acquisition of a new set of grammatical, lexical, and phonological forms but as a struggle of concrete socially constituted and always situated beings to participate in the symbolically mediated lifeworld of another culture" (Pavlenko & Lantolf, 2000, p.155).

This paradigm shift is perhaps best represented by socio-cultural theorists Lave and Wenger's (1991) 'Community of Practice' (C of P) model which brings forth a new metaphor – that of participation – which is applied in tension with the more traditional one of language 'acquisition' (Pavlenko & Lantolf, 2000, p.155). Here, second language learning is understood "as the struggle for participation…[which] obliges us to think of learning as a process of becoming a member of a certain community which entails the ability to communicate in the language of this community and act according to its particular norms" (Sfard, 1998, p.6).

The social turn has also had an impact on graduate students' research in the area of French immersion and SLA. While some of this work still reflects a linguistic and cognitive orientation, for example the studies conducted by Amodeo (2000), Barret (2000), Blais (2000) and Bournot-Trites (1995), others such as Chan (1996), Laganière (1997), MacFarlane (1997) and Riva (1996) have moved into the area of sociolinguistics. This shift allows for a more balanced and complete picture of the French immersion experience to emerge. Particularly important is the noticeable move to undertake more socio-cultural and socio-politically oriented studies in the area of French immersion education (Dunn, 2002; Fraser Child, 1998; Makropoulos, 1998; Tassone, 2001).

A Lack of Vernacular Language

Studies such as those done by Cohen (1997), Cohen and Tarone (1997) and Tarone and Swain (1995) are particularly relevant to my work, as they have shown that immersion classrooms may expose students to only one rather formal register of language. More specifically, Tarone and Swain (1995) found that "the immersion classroom provides input only in an academic register of the L2, while an L2 adolescent

vernacular register is only available in other social settings" (p.187). They concluded that immersion classes reflect diglossic situations where the "second language is the superordinate, formal language variety, and the native language is reserved for use in informal social interactions" (p.166). Tarone and Swain's (1995) findings suggest that:

> In language immersion classrooms, *diglossia* may be the norm. A diglossic situation is one in which a second language is reserved for use in informal social interactions. Consistent informal reports suggest to us that immersion classrooms are not only diglossic but become increasingly so in the upper primary grades. (p.166)

Many researchers (Manzer, Benson & Greaves, 1984; Lapkin & Swain, 1984; Blais, 2003; Harley, 1994; Cummins, 1995) have agreed that French immersion students have good receptive skills (understanding spoken and written language) but that their production skills (writing and speaking) are much weaker. In Dean's (1996) work on "Speech Profiles of Early French Immersion Students at the Senior High Level", she indicates that French immersion high school "students' speech contains many errors" and the newly released document, "The State of French-as-Second-Language in Canada in 2005", published by Canadian Parents for French (CPF), certainly seems to support these findings.

Fraser Child's (1998) study entitled, "Learning Immersion: The Multiple Worlds of French Immersion Students" is pertinent here, as she explains that:

> (FI) students have limited exposure to French during school hours; they receive mixed messages about the usefulness of French and the

> importance of learning another language. Their mixing languages (French and English) is accepted and often mirrored by some of the teachers. Students have little exposure to authentic language models. French is viewed as a 'school-only phenomenon' and receives only limited school-wide support. FI students are seldom recognized for their French skills and do have few occasions to take pride in what they are learning. (Sanaoui, 2002, p.32)

Nevertheless, Fraser Child concludes that "FI students do remarkably well and FI still remains the most effective way of learning French in the school system" (p.32). Lalonde (2002) stated that:

> Early French Immersion (EFI) students remain dependent on English and persistently use English patterns and structures. Further factors affecting interlanguage development include the EFI student's insufficient exposure to French, insufficient interaction with native speakers of French, in appropriate curriculum materials and artificial learning conditions. (Sanaoui, 2002, p.43)

Rehner (2002) has suggested that in order to move French immersion students' expressive language skills nearer to native norms, "explicit teaching of the discursive and non-discursive uses of the expressions is needed to redress the students' over-reliance on their first language and greater extra-curricular exposure to French is required to help students approximate native norms" (Sanaoui, 2002, p.59).

Although there seems to have been near consensus in regards to French immersion students' weaknesses at the level of vernacular language, few studies have looked at the 'consequences' of these weaknesses for those students wishing to pursue their second language at the post-secondary level (Yalden, 1982; Wesche, 1989; Wesche, Morrison, Ready, & Pawley, 1990; Goldberg & Noels, 2006). One of the purposes of my study was to discover what these consequences might be for students attempting to pursue post-secondary studies in a Francophone post-secondary institution.

The Interaction of French Immersion and Francophone Students

The 2004 report by Canadian Parents for French suggests that French immersion students would benefit from more opportunities to interact in French with Francophones. Other studies have stated that French immersion students 'should' in fact actively pursue these types of interactions with L1 speakers (Shapson, 1985; Bradley, 1989; CPF, 2004). Heller (1990) found, on the other hand, that French immersion students often lack the opportunity as well as the desire to use their L2 skills as their primary language of communication.

Laganière (1997) and others have noted the positive impact on oral production skills of tasks undertaken collaboratively between French Second Language learners and their Francophone counterparts. MacFarlane (1997) wrote that, "the [FI] classroom equips learners with basic language skills without which communication would be impossible, and [that student exchanges with Francophones equipped them] with the self-confidence to attempt communication with native speakers" (Sanaoui, 2002, p.48). Other researchers such as Wesche (1993) found that even though students had the opportunity

to use French in a Francophone post-secondary institution, and said they had the desire to do so, the actual use of French was low.

While Broner and Tarone (2001) likely would not disagree that encounters between French immersion and Francophone students might be beneficial for French immersion students, they do indicate that the situation is perhaps more complex than has been indicated. They believe that simply placing students from different French speaking contexts together in the hopes that the L2 learners will become more proficient is not all that may be required. For example, they found that the identity of the interlocutor had a significant impact on the relative amount of L1 and L2 produced. When the teacher was the interlocutor, the students always used the L2, but when the interlocutor was a peer, additional variables came into play: the content of the activity, social relationships, and whether the children were on or off task.

Chan (1996) found that students in French immersion programs tend to switch to L1 when they do not know expressions in French. This is often because they learn French in the isolated context of a classroom. Sanaoui (2002) also suggests that FI students have a tendency to code-switch when the discourse is of an emotional nature, as well as "to enhance the comprehension of the message delivered or received" (p.20). Riva (1996) found that the emotional dimension of learning a second language and the accompanying feelings of not always speaking French well enough, was important in that it often created a type of resistance to language learning in the students. They frequently reiterated:

> their strong dislike of being corrected in front of other students…[and] revealed that little could be done if they decided to speak English during

> French time. They talked about the difficulties they encountered in learning French and in using it in and outside the school…[On the other hand,] these students [spoke of deriving] a great sense of accomplishment from the fact that they knew and understood French while their families and friends usually did not. They also understood the usefulness of being bilingual and believed it would give them an advantage in the future. (Sanaoui, 2002, p.60)

The French Immersion Community

Very few studies have considered the French immersion context as a specific type of community, where students may have an identity of their own. Blais (2003) is one exception, as she studied a FI classroom and found that the students were neither Francophone nor Anglophone, but something else. Tassone's (2001) findings indicated a strong sense of 'family' characterizing the French immersion experience.

In addition, Broner and Tarone (2001) indicated that moving to a very different linguistic community can be much more complex and difficult for French immersion students than educators might think. They state that:

> as advanced L2 learners, these students must master not just one register or language variety, but several: all those voices or varieties appropriate to the speech communities to which the learner belongs, or wishes to belong. The learner must use these to achieve various social goals; for example, a formal register may be needed for situations in which the learner's power and authority in a particular community must be expressed, but an

informal register is essential for situations in which solidarity must be expressed. (p.516-517)

Immersion Students in a Francophone Post-Secondary Context

According to Edwards (1989), "in the past few years, as a result of the growing maturity of French immersion programs in Canada, bilingual education at the post-secondary level has acquired a new definition and has attracted a new clientèle" (p.44). Stakeholders such as Tardif (1999), a former dean at the Faculté Saint-Jean, confirm that the popularity of French immersion (K-12) programs across Canada has generated an increased interest in high school graduates wanting to pursue post-secondary education in their second language. Statistics collected at the Faculté Saint-Jean over the last ten years indicate that the enrollment of Anglophone students equals and may even surpass enrollment by Francophones (see Table 1 for specifics in the next section). Tardif (1999) has said that she believes this trend is likely to continue as more and more (K-12) students graduate from French immersion programs.

Inadequate Enrolment Numbers of Francophone Students

There can be no doubt that Francophones living in Alberta had to fight long and hard before they were granted the right to their own schools and school boards through the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms in 1982. The criterion of adequate enrolment as a condition to opening their own schools has meant that many Francophones outside of Quebec have often been forced to attend English schools (including French immersion programs) or mixed schools and not Francophone ones (Tomlinson and Lapkin, 1989). Since the majority of Alberta's population is Anglophone (81.8%) and

Franco-Albertans account for a mere 2.0% of the total provincial population, translating roughly to 59,735 individuals with only about 17,000 still speaking French at home (Leclerc, 2000), the issue of having enough Francophone students in one geographic area has been an important one. For instance Edmonton, the province's second largest city, only reached sufficient numbers to open their own schools and school boards in 1992. Smaller communities that still do not have access to their own schools, has meant that graduating minority Francophones' competence in French and sense of Francophone identity have remained problematic" (Tomlinson and Lapkin,1989, p.4).

The issue of adequate enrollment has had an impact not only on Francophone schools but on the Francophone universities as well. Ruest (1988) discusses the reasons these universities have had to accept more and more L2 students into their milieu. He noted that:

> the future of the minority Francophone university is threatened by the limited number of students choosing to attend. As the Francophone population erodes under the impact of assimilation, the university is faced with a shrinking client population whose post-secondary needs remain as varied as ever" (p.11).

The theme or *storyline of assimilation* with its underlying notion of threat and the need to protect the French language from the surrounding English majority, has an important impact (as will be shown later in this study), upon the lived experiences of French immersion students attending a Francophone institution like CSJ.

Tomlinson and Lapkin (1989) explain that although necessary, the solution of bringing in Anglophones to compensate for low Francophone numbers, has not always sat well with Francophone stakeholders:

> An important change has occurred at Francophone universities, especially those in minority regions. Because obtaining sufficient native-speaker enrolment is still problematic, these institutions have admitted French immersion graduates in order to survive or grow. While this is a positive development for Anglophones seeking to perfect their French, some Francophones argue that the presence of Anglophones in their institutions has been detrimental to the linguistic and cultural development of minority students. As in Ontario, they would prefer a return to homogeneous francophone institutions. (p.5)

Mougeon (1984) and Beauchemin (1985) are two researchers who have noted the negative impact on Francophones of students arriving from French immersion programs at the post-secondary level. Tardif and McMahon (1989) found that there is a delaying effect on Francophone students' learning when they study alongside French immersion graduates. Since both Tardif and McMahon played significant leadership roles at the Faculté Saint-Jean, their statements are particularly revealing of the sentiments of many of those at the institution that have been forced to accept increasing numbers of Anglophone students into their milieu in order to compensate for low Francophone numbers.

Even though Ruest (1988) and Mougeon (1987) might not outright dismiss admitting French immersion graduates to Francophone post-secondary institutions, they

do note certain risks. Much like Tardif and McMahon (1989), Ruest (1988) is of the opinion that:

> Immersion programs are growing ever more popular in Canada on the strength of their promise to make unilingual Anglophones bilingual. In fact the graduates of these programs have acquired a certain competence in French but it cannot be said, as some over-enthusiastic educators would have us believe, that all are 'perfectly' bilingual. (p.11)

According to Ruest (1988), this less than perfect bilingualism does not mean that these students should not attend a Francophone post-secondary institution. He indicates that:

> many graduates are competent enough to undertake university-level studies in French and [that] it would be in their interest to do so in order to further increase their fluency. [He sees that] rather than limit themselves to the artificial environment of an immersion program or a handful of courses given in French at an Anglophone university, they would have the opportunity of actually living in French and experiencing the culture that goes with it. The process of becoming bilingual would thus not be confined to simply learning the mechanics of the French language but would have a cultural dimension as well, sensitizing Anglophone students to the different facets of French-Canadian culture. (p.12)

While in theory this may sound promising, the complexity of bringing L2 and native French speakers together under the same institutional roof is not always quite so straightforward.

The reality today is that Anglophone students now outnumber Francophones at the Campus Saint-Jean. The history of the Faculté Saint-Jean, however, is important, as it represents one dimension of the Francophone (outside of Québec) struggle against assimilation. Assimilation and the need to protect the French language from the greater English speaking majority in Canada are two 'storylines' that run through FSJ's history. The struggle to maintain one's language and culture has often translated into a type of 'survivor' mentality amongst many Francophones (although perhaps not all, as Guérin-Lajoie (2003) notes that French Canadians can have many storylines). Many staunch Francophone supporters in Alberta, who fought for the right to educate their children and grandchildren in the French language, were either affiliated with or had studied at Faculté Saint-Jean. As a result, they have often perceived the institution as part of their own history and culture. The fact that French can now be taught in schools and that Francophones have their own school boards, has not come about accidentally, but rather through the will of certain individuals and groups that make up Franco-Albertan communities around the province.

This situation has consequences for the contemporary French immersion students coming into the institution because they do not possess the same language skills or the same historical roots as the Francophone students. In order to fully understand the complexity of this situation one must understand the way language and history has been lived by the institution that until recently was known as the Faculté Saint-Jean.

The Faculté Saint-Jean (1908 – 2005)[1]

[1] This historical overview was translated and paraphrased from Levasseur-Ouimet's (1997) book *Regards, paroles et gestes.*

Saint-Jean was founded in 1908, in Pincher Creek Alberta and over the ensuing years it has grown from a student population of 5 to 596 in 2005 (see Table 1). It began as a junior college charged with the mandate of preparing young men for the priesthood; the Oblates in particular. Here, young men undertook religious studies as well as courses in mathematics and science. In 1909, the school was made up of five students and two teachers. In 1910, it was decided that for recruitment purposes, a more central location was needed, and the institution was moved to Edmonton, where it found a home on 111th street near Saint-Joachim church. By that time the institution had grown to eleven students and three professors.

In 1911, it was concluded that Saint-Jean had enjoyed enough success to warrant the construction of a new building and it was granted a few hectares of land in the south of Edmonton, where it is still located today. The student population had grown to 29, divided into four classrooms with five professors responsible for their education. In 1915, the first student was ordained. After this, the institution grew by leaps and bounds, and by 1917 there were approximately fifty students attending the college.

The year 1927 saw the biggest changes at the institution when many of the junior English speaking students of German or Polish origins decided to attend Saint-Paul's college in Winnipeg rather than Saint-Jean. With these students gone, it was decided in 1927 by a decree from Rome, that the College was to be named a French language institution. In reality, Saint-Jean remained a bilingual institution, albeit with a strong emphasis on French, until 1961.

Year	Francophones	Anglophones	Other	Undeclared	Total Student Population
1909					5
1911					9
1917					50
1943					130
1987	243	264			510
1994-95	205	302	26	0	533
1995-96	184	245	21	0	450
1996-97	163	215	23	0	401
1997-98	147 (39.0%)	210 (55.8%)	18 (4.7%)	1 (0.2%)	376
1998-99	177 (44.9%)	208 (52.7%)	9 (2.2%)	0	394
1999-00	173 (41.5%)	225 (54%)	17 (4%)	2 (0.4%)	417
2000-01	170 (39.8%)	231 (54.0%)	17 (3.9%)	9 (2.1%)	427
2001-02	205 (44.9%)	225 (49.2%)	23 (5.3%)	4 (0.9%)	457
2002-03	182 (37.6%)	272 (56.1%)	29 (6%)	1 (0.2%)	484
2003-04	180 (36.5%)	288 (58.4%)	24 (4.9%)	1 (0.2%)	493
2004-05	167 (30.4%)	356 (64.7%)	22 (4%)	5 (0.9%)	550
2005-06	177 (29.6%)	375 (62.7%)	36 (5.8%)	10 (1.6%)	596

Table 1

Growth of Student Population at FSJ from 1909 to 2005[2]

[2] Adapted from: Registrar's Office, statistics for FSJ, University of Alberta (2006).

In 1928, Saint-Jean became 'officially' affiliated with the University of Ottawa where students were then able to obtain the equivalent of a high school degree from this institution. By 1943, Saint-Jean was no longer an ecclesiastic institution but opened its doors to all young people. With their grade twelve diploma, students now had access to all faculties at the University of Alberta, and the student population increased to one hundred and thirty and continued to increase until 1962.

In 1948, with affiliation to both the University of Ottawa as well as to the Ministry of Education of Alberta, Saint-Jean's mission remained the education of an elite Catholic and French Canadian student clientele and considered itself as uniquely adapted to the special needs of a western Canadian population. Studies were still aimed at a general population and were bilingual in nature, albeit priority was still given to religious studies and the French language.

In 1953, the new pavilion was opened and by 1958 the institution stated that its goal was to instruct young French Canadians for knowledge as well as wisdom in order to develop the whole human being on all levels: intellectual, social and moral. In 1959, a document was released entitled, "La fraternité française" (the French fraternity) which stated that the personnel at Saint-Jean now consisted of 23 Oblate fathers as well as four other priests who were on sabbatical.

In 1955, the College asked that courses be provided through the University of Laval and offered at Saint-Jean, in order to provide teachers with the ability to teach French and religious studies in the classroom. This push made it clear to all that there was a desperate need for a school of Education (called 'normal' schools at the time) at the

College Saint-Jean. Due to certain political complications with Laval, it was not until 1963 that the College Saint-Jean affiliated instead with the Faculty of Education at the University of Alberta and created its own 'normal school' or department of Education. The agreement between the two institutions was that the College Saint-Jean would offer a two year program to prepare future teachers to teach French and Religion in Alberta. Half the courses required were given in English through the Faculty of Education at the University of Alberta, and the other half in French at the College Saint-Jean. This new affiliation did not alter the existing affiliation with the University of Ottawa and those students studying for a Bachelor of Arts degree.

The decade from 1960 to 1970 marked a period of accelerated growth at the College Saint-Jean. It is important to understand the larger historical and political context in the province of Alberta at this point in time. From 1892 onwards, English was the official language of instruction in Alberta. In extraordinary circumstances, where a child did not understand English, an exception was made where a student could be instructed in French for the first two years of schooling. In all other instances, the province permitted only one hour of French instruction per day, starting in grade three and ending in grade six. Also there was only one half hour of religious instruction permitted per day. These exceptions of course could not usually be accommodated as there were no courses offered at the University of Alberta that could prepare teachers to instruct in French or to teach religious studies. The only real way, then, for Francophones to keep their language alive, was in the community and/or at home. As Levasseur-Ouimet stated in 1996, "French at school during this first stage was handled by the community and parents, on

both the policy and pedagogic fronts. You might call it a kind of clandestine management. The main activity was survival and protection" (n.p.).

In September 1963, there were 22 students enrolled in the Education program at the College Saint-Jean. Through the efforts of then president of the Association Canadienne Francaise de l'Alberta, Louis Desrochers, the Minister of Cultural Affairs of Quebec granted the sum of $10,000 to help pay the expenses of the first year of operations at Saint-Jean. In 1964, Saint-Jean announced a new construction project. The cost of this new building was estimated at $600,000 but was closer to one million dollars once it was completed. The new building was to provide administration offices, classrooms, laboratories and conference rooms. Once again the ACFA requested financial aid from the province of Quebec and it was the Minister of Cultural Affairs and Services to French Canadians outside of Quebec that provided a $100,000 grant to the College. It must be noted at this point how Franco-Albertans, and especially the College Saint-Jean, have historically needed to rely heavily on the government of Quebec and the federal government in Ottawa to fund their continued efforts to keep the French language alive. On the other hand, the Alberta government has never been overly concerned with the needs of its Francophone population.

In 1966 the College was granted permission from the government of Alberta to teach the last three years of secondary education in French, as long as the teachers were properly certified. Also it was in 1966, that the affiliation between the University of Ottawa and the College Saint-Jean came to an end. The Francophone newspaper, "La Survivance", (Survival) announced that the first year of a Bachelor of Arts degree could now be completed at the College Saint-Jean. By 1968 this was extended to the first two

years. It was also at this time that an official ceremony took place where representatives of the Oblates community, the University of Alberta, the Minister of Affairs for Francophones outside of Quebec, the Minister of Cultural Affairs in Quebec, the government of Alberta, the Franco-Albertan community, as well as parents and past students from the College, gathered to celebrate the official union between the U of A and the College Saint-Jean. Here Rector Johns spoke of this union as the building of something important and lasting for future generations of students. This project, he said, would not only profit French Canadians but all those who wanted to become bilingual (Levasseur-Ouimet, 1997).

In 1967, changes were made to the provincial school laws, which meant that French could now be taught as the language of instruction in schools as long as there were sufficient numbers of Francophones in those regions. It was decided that grades one and two would be taught solely in French and that in grade three one hour of English instruction would be added. It was also considered important that there be at least three hours of French instruction per day throughout grades four to twelve inclusively. At the yearly Congress meeting of the ACFA (Association Canadienne Française de l'Alberta) in St. Paul, Alberta, it was stated that both the government of Alberta and the University of Alberta needed to be notified that the teaching personnel required to carry out such changes could be trained at the bilingual education department at the College Saint-Jean, which meant that the institution should receive financial support to accomplish the task. This is an indication of how tightly linked the Francophone community was to Saint-Jean. The voices of the Francophone community saw the College as a pivotal means to ensure French education in Alberta schools.

On December 11th 1967, the religious leaders at the College invited a group of representatives from the Francophone community to Saint-Jean in order to apprise them of a project proposed by then Vice President (Academic), Max Wyman at the University of Alberta. Wyman believed that the College Saint-Jean could easily enough become an extension of the University of Alberta. The college, he felt, could be a kind of French institution where certain subjects could be taught in French. The professors, he said, would be paid by the University of Alberta and the university would even help with the operating costs of the institution. It was also stated that after a period of five years, the university would be open to paying for new projects. This proposal brought about much interest but there were also certain drawbacks such as the fact that although students would take some courses in French at the College, the rest of their course work would need to be taken in English on the main campus of the U of A. The belief at the FSJ was that such a short stay at the College would not be sufficient to provide the French 'mentality' to students. Those in charge at FSJ believed that to really profit from this type of French training, students needed to spend at least two years at the College. There was also a concern about 'preserving' the Francophones' historical and political rights that had been so hard won. A written memo was sent to Wyman stating that the College would be willing to add certain courses in French in specific subject areas but asked in return, that from then on, the College be considered the French Centre of the University of Alberta.

In 1968, the government of Alberta adopted the long awaited amendment to the School Act, which permitted the use of French as a language of instruction from grades three to twelve for up to 50% of the school day. This was an important moment in the

history of French education in Alberta. From 1968 on, the number of courses taught in French increased at the College and there were discussions with the University of Alberta about offering courses above and beyond the second year level. This presupposed an even tighter link between the College and the U of A.

In 1970, the College Saint-Jean officially became a university college that could offer various programs that were taught in English at the University of Alberta. In April 1970, the new School Act was adopted and as far as French was concerned, it was stated that "A board may authorize that French be used as a language of instruction in addition to the English language in all or any of its schools" (ACFA 1970, in Levasseur-Ouimet, 1997, p. 36). This law meant that rather than simply teaching French, Francophones could teach all subjects *in* French. This new law also meant that more and more teachers would need to be trained to teach in French and it was felt that Saint-Jean was ideally suited to fill this need.

Around the same time, there were developments on the national front. In 1963, the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism led the Canadian parliament to eventually adopt the Official Languages Act in 1969. In 1970, in response to this law, Saint-Jean asked to be recognized as the official institution responsible for the training of pre-service teachers in French education for the four western provinces. It was decided that Federal monies would be shared equally between the College Saint-Boniface in Manitoba and the College Saint-Jean in Alberta, as both would represent the West. It was also at this point that the College Universitaire Saint-Jean was recognized as the bilingual and bicultural campus of the University of Alberta.

In 1971, Dr. McMahon, the dean of Saint-Jean, announced that the whole Francophone community must come together in a special meeting to discuss the problem of the French 'climate' that needed to be created at Saint-Jean. "Even though the institution defines itself as 'bilingual,'" he said, "it is obvious that we needn't worry about English since it will speak itself all by itself and in more than sufficient quantity" (Translated by Skogen, Levasseur-Ouimet, 1997, p.39). McMahon went on to say,

> What is to become of French? We have the responsibility to create a centre where French culture and the French way of life can flourish within an Anglophone milieu. All those who support us, expect this from us. And in spite of considerable resources, we have been unable to create a French climate in our institution...We must act now to ensure the French character of the College. (translated by Skogen, Levasseur-Ouimet, 1997, p. 39)

This type of 'call to action' reflects the Francophone leaders' attempts to assure a strong community of affinity where a certain linguistic and cultural homogeneity could build strong walls, assuring the survival of the French language within. Those at Saint-Jean, who historically had no option but to label the institution as "bilingual," felt that with the changes in legal status brought about by the new School Act, they needed to be seen as more 'French' than bilingual. Saint-Jean's historic battle to secure a place for itself in an English province went from one of gratitude for what little it could get, to a position of wanting to create a home for the Francophone population, where those who wanted to continue their post-secondary studies in French, could do so. But more than this, it has always been, in many ways, the centre of the Franco-Albertan community and it was not unusual to find various services and Francophone organizations under its roof.

This caused a certain 'blurring' between the College's educational purposes and its political obligations to the Francophone community. This historical 'enmeshment' has important political implications today.

In 1972, Dr. McMahon once again called a special meeting where the theme, "We must organize", emerged and where the need for sustained strategies to recruit more Francophone students was stated as an urgent priority. A recruitment team went out that year to visit thirty or so high schools around the province and invited all grade 12 students to a three day open doors event at the college. Altogether, approximately 300 students visited the College. Also in 1972, the dean announced that both the Federal and provincial governments, based on the recommendations made by the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism, would provide $100,000 per year to any province that had an official centre for the learning of the nation's official second language. The importance of Saint-Jean promoting itself as this type of centre was highlighted at this 1972 meeting.

By 1973, there were 17 full-time and 11 part-time professors on staff and 169 students enrolled at the College. At this time it was noted that large numbers of English students were interested in pursuing post-secondary programs at the College and it was with deep regret that Saint-Jean had to accept that only a relatively small number of Francophone students were interested in coming to the institution. In response to this situation, it was clearly stated in the 1972-73 yearbook that aside from the fact that Saint-Jean offered a bilingual degree in the B.A., B.Ed and the B.Sc programs – the primary goal of the college was to "permit Francophone students to pursue their postsecondary studies in a context which provided for cultural and intellectual stimulation based in a

French way of life and only secondly was it meant to enable Anglophone students to benefit from the same" (translated by Skogen, Levasseur-Ouimet, 1997, p. 41).

This points to how Francophones have historically felt (at times) the need to construct themselves as 'Us' (as in likeminded) and 'Them' (as in Other or Anglophone). In order to sustain what Friedman (1983) calls a *community of affinity*, those at Saint-Jean seem often to have felt that it was essential that those who came to study there be as homogeneous as possible; in other words have the same linguistic, cultural and political goals. These common goals would help assure the survival of the French language and culture. This of course is not unique to Saint-Jean nor is it the only possible storyline, but the tendency toward homogeneous regrouping is quite common in communities that have felt the threat of assimilation.

In 1974, Dr. Stephen Carey of the College Saint-Jean organized the first of four national conferences on bilingualism and education. The goal was to encourage research in the areas of biculturalism and French language acquisition either as a first or second language, as well as in the area of French education. At this time, there were a number of French Canadian history courses taught at the College and there was a growing enthusiasm for this type of Francophone historical grounding. 'Le salon d'histoire franco-Albertain' became a reality this same year, bringing to life the Franco-Albertan history.

Until 1974 the College was owned by the Oblates religious order, but in 1974 it was announced that they would sell the College. The University of Alberta showed serious interest in becoming the new owners of the College Saint-Jean, wanting to keep this campus as a reflection of a 'bilingual' university. Dr. A. G. McCalla was charged with the decision of determining Saint-Jean's future. McCalla received an overwhelming

number of letters from the Francophone community in support of keeping the legacy of the College Saint-Jean alive. Deeply moved by this outpouring, he stated, along with his recommendation to the University to purchase Saint-Jean that the Francophone mandate begun by the Oblates was to be continued at Saint-Jean. McCalla also recommended that one third of the amount of the asking price be placed in a special fund (le fond Saint-Jean), which was to be used to advance projects leading to the further development of the Francophonie. He also recommended that Saint-Jean offer extension courses while continuing to provide the Francophone community with physical space for events within its institution.

In 1976 the government of Alberta announced that it had officially purchased the College with the following statement appearing in the Edmonton Journal:

> As the dominant French cultural, language and educational presence, College Saint-Jean has provided an extremely valuable focal point for the French Canadian community in this province. Over the years, Saint-Jean founders and highly regarded staff have done significant service to Canada in successfully sustaining the College and what it represents of national culture in Alberta. (Edmonton Journal, 1976 in Levasseur-Ouimet, 1997, p.46)

It is interesting to note that even during this auspicious occasion there seems to have been slightly different perceptions regarding the ultimate mandate of the institution. While the last rector of Saint-Jean, Paul Poirier, stated that it was important that the elders and the 'friends' of the College continue to support its 'task'…others, like then Prime Minister Pierre E. Trudeau, noted in a congratulatory letter the importance of

Saint-Jean's continued contribution to the promotion of bilingualism and biculturalism, which are what make up the strength and uniqueness of our country (translated by Skogen, Levasseur-Ouimet, 1997). In other words, while those at Saint-Jean speak of their 'task' or 'mission' as that of fighting for their linguistic and cultural rights, others outside of this group see the institution's goals as the promotion of bilingualism and biculturalism. One can wonder what exactly is meant by the terms bilingualism and biculturalism here. Do they mean Francophones speaking English and French or is it Anglophones speaking English and French? The former is most likely the case.

In January of 1977, the College was given full faculty status and on December 9th of the same year the College Saint-Jean officially changed its name to the Faculté Saint-Jean. At that time dean McMahon released the following document, highlighting once again the goals of the institution:

> The principal objective of this institution is to insure that graduating students from Western Canadian high schools who have the credentials to be admitted to the University of Alberta, and having a certain knowledge of the French language, can access a university program where the instructional language as well as the language of communication are normally in French so that these students can complete their undergraduate degree with a certain functional competency in French and in English. (CUSJ, 1977, translated by Skogen from Levasseur-Ouimet, 1997, p. 53)

It is important to note the change in language here, as it is the first time second language learners were acknowledged at Saint-Jean. The use of the words 'functional competency' echoes the French immersion goal of creating 'functional bilinguals.' As well, the fact

that new students need only a certain knowledge of the French language in order to enroll, indicates a shift away from the 1974 stated goal of, "permit[ting] Francophone students to pursue their post-secondary studies in a context which provides for cultural and intellectual stimulation, based in a French way of life and only secondly is it meant to enable Anglophone students to benefit from the same" (translated by Skogen, Levasseur-Ouimet, 1997, p.41).

Because the number of Anglophone students at FSJ went from 16 in 1970-71 to 60 in the year of 1975-76, a decision was made to implement language competency entrance exams for all students in both official languages. For the first time, a position of 'animateur culturel' was created in order to help promote a French ambiance and atmosphere at Saint-Jean. And perhaps to counteract this watering down of the institution's primary goal, the same year saw another strong push for the recruitment of Francophone students and concerted efforts were made to increase the student population at the Faculté Saint-Jean. School visits were arranged, informational evenings were established, and attempts were made to strengthen the links with the alumni and the various Francophone organizations in the community. The French climate or what was called, 'le vouloir-vivre bilingue' was of great concern to the personnel at the Faculté Saint-Jean. It was strongly believed that there must be more cultural activities in place to help stimulate the French climate.

At this point it was increasingly obvious that what was happening in provincial schools was impacting Saint-Jean. In 1976, the total population of Albertan students of school age attending school was 458,638. Of these, 9,680 students had French as a first language and 5,398 were enrolled in what were then called 'bilingual programs'. As of

1976, 'bilingual programs' were replaced by 'immersion programs' and a few 'Francophone classes'. Between 1975 and 1980, the number of Albertan students enrolled in these programs doubled, going from 5,398 to 10,547. In 1980, the Byrne report entitled, "A Proposal in Teacher Education for Faculté Saint-Jean", predicted a student population of 15,000 in these immersion programs for the year 1984-85. It was obvious that there would be an increasing need for teachers in these French language programs in Alberta. According to Byrne this increase of 2,000 students meant that Saint-Jean would need to graduate 80 more teachers per year. Up until this point, Francophone teachers from Alberta had been keeping the bilingual programs alive. Increasingly, Alberta school boards were calling upon teachers in Eastern Canada to fill these positions. In spite of this, there were still insufficient teachers to fill these positions, which meant that Alberta needed to train more teachers within the province rather than rely on recruitment efforts in other provinces to meet the need. School Boards turned to the Faculté Saint-Jean to solve the problem of teacher shortages in French immersion programs. Accordingly, the student population grew from 190 in 1978 to 360 in 1985.

By 1979 there were four degrees offered at the Faculté Saint-Jean: the BEd, the BEd/AD, the BA and the BSc. The institution was officially recognized as the bilingual faculty of the University of Alberta and promoted as one of a kind in Western Canada. Its mandate was to allow all Francophone students the possibility of obtaining a post-secondary degree in their first language as well as benefiting Anglophone students from Alberta and elsewhere.

In 1983, Dean Gamilla Morcos made the following statement:

> We belong to a massively Anglophone province but far from discouraging us it has pushed us rather to face the challenge. We have the conviction and, I believe, have demonstrated that a superior quality of instruction can be offered in the French language and that our language is a carrier of progress and of generosity…La Faculté distinguishes herself by intense activity and diversity. She represents a Francophone centre infinitely precious, at the heart of the western provinces, a privileged link where young bilinguals are trained and affirmed. (translated by Skogen, from Levasseur-Ouimet, 1997, p. 64)

Once again, within this statement is heard the echoes of a minority group within an overwhelming majority who must fight for their language.

The year 1985-86 saw another strong push to recruit students, especially Franco-Albertans. It was also at this point that there was increasing pressure coming from the newly appointed Francophone schools, asking that the specific needs of Francophone students be acknowledged and met by FSJ, including those in French immersion programs.

In 1987-88 a series of statistics showed that of the 534 students enrolled at FSJ, 243 had French as a first language, while 228 had English as a first language. The statistics also showed that of those enrolled in their first year of education, 72 had French as a first language while 117 had English as their mother tongue. Faced with these numbers, some FSJ administrators began to wonder whether or not recruitment strategies needed to change. In January of the same year, members of the Students' Association at the FSJ indicated that they were worried by the high number of Anglophone students at

the institution and asked if measures could be taken to ensure the retention of the French climate at the institution. It was also in 1988 that in response to the Francophone community's struggles to implement Article 23 of the Charter of Freedom and Rights, allowing Francophones the right to control their own schools and school boards, the Education department at FSJ created a program called 'Teaching in a Francophone minority context." This was the only program of its type in Canada.

In spite of the recruitment efforts to entice Francophones to FSJ and putting in place admission criteria to restrict those who did not have sufficient language skills in French from enrolling, over the next few years, the number of Francophones continued to decrease proportionally to the increase in the number of Anglophones. According to the administration, in order to keep the French climate at the Faculté alive, more than half of the student population must be Francophone.

In 1991-92 the first French immersion class graduated from grade 12 in Alberta. At FSJ it was decided that admission requirements would be frozen at 65% (as a required Grade Point Average) and that additional admission criteria would be added indicating that all students must have an adequate grasp of the French language both oral and written, in order to be admitted to the FSJ and that these skills were to be demonstrated in a number of ways. These restrictions were one way of responding to the long standing preoccupation that many Francophones had with numerous students' limited linguistic competence in the various programs. In September 1992, the Centre for Help in French (Centre de Communication Orale et Écrite) was created in response to the growing number of students needing support with their written French. This situation is not unlike the ESL student who arrives at an Anglophone university and must write the TOFL or

equivalent language competency exam and may or may not require extra help with reading and writing in English.

1994 saw a drop in enrollment at FSJ for the first time since 1963. This drop, although not substantial, put in jeopardy the argument for building a new residence and completing the much needed renovations to the main building. It was therefore decided to undertake another recruitment drive, visiting certain schools in Alberta that were recognized for their strong second language programs. For the first time, in its history, the institution felt pushed by financial need to look to the French immersion programs for students.

It soon became obvious that recruitment was the only long term solution to the enrollment problem. A wide net was cast, including visits to Quebec in addition to Francophone schools in the areas of Saint-Paul, Plamondon, Medley, Legal, Donnelly, Jean-Cote and the Francophone high school Maurice Lavallée in Edmonton. There were meetings with parents, with students and with teachers from around the province as well as with principals and school counselors. Student-ambassadors were sent out to French immersion schools to aid in the recruitment of students.

In 1998, Heritage Canada announced that it was giving the Faculté Saint-Jean a $500,000 grant for the first phase of construction on a new residence. In this press release Ministre McLellan declared,

> Les jeunes sont notre avenir et c'est à eux que reviendra la responsabilité d'assurer la survie de la langue et de la culture françaises ainsi que de leur pays. Nous voulons leur donner les ressources dont ils ont besoin pour

préparer cet avenir. La Faculté Saint-Jean est un chef de file dans la promotion et la défense de la langue et de la culture françaises. (Partrimoine canadien, 1998)

The young are our future and it is to them that will come the responsibility of ensuring the survival of the French language and culture as well as their country. We want to give them the resources that they need to prepare this future. The Faculté Saint-Jean is a leader in the promotion and the defence of the French language and culture. (Heritage Canada, 1998)

Today, in 2006, with Anglophones making up approximately 60% of the student population, one wonders if this institution can still be thought of as Francophone. In 2005, Dean Marc Arnal instituted a name change whereby the Faculté Saint-Jean became 'Campus' Saint-Jean. Although this could be considered a further shift away from the Francophone roots of the institution toward a more 'bilingual' identity, when one reads the welcome on the CSJ website, it still announces itself as a Francophone institution,

Le Campus Saint-Jean, situé dans la ville d'Edmonton, capitale de l'Alberta, est une partie intégrale de la University of Alberta. Il s'agit d'un petit joyau francophone (600 étudiants) croissant au cœur de l'Ouest canadien dans un environnement anglophone. (http://www.fsj.ualberta.ca, 2006)

Campus Saint-Jean, located in the city of Edmonton, Alberta's capital, is an integral part of the University of Alberta. It is a little francophone gem (600 students) growing in the heart of Western Canada in an Anglophone environment. (http://www.fsj.ualberta.ca)

Summary

The Faculté Saint-Jean has had a long and eventful history in Alberta. It has been an educational and cultural 'home' to Francophones from across Canada for nearly a century. Throughout this history, themes of *survival*, of *protecting* the French language and culture from *assimilation* into the larger English Canadian world and of *fighting* for one's rights, emerged. The consequences of these themes will be seen in later chapters.

CHAPTER THREE

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Even in the most cultured and enlightened of societies, a great many people are left out in the cold because they do not fit what makes the group comfortable, because they, in one way or another, make people uneasy. One of the problems that faces any group of any size – from family to nation – is the extent to which it can confirm someone who is radically other.

Maurice Friedman (1983, p.64)

An Existential-Anthropological Understanding of Community

The purpose of this study was to understand the experiences of French immersion graduates as they move from the French immersion community to a Francophone postsecondary community such as the Campus Saint-Jean. More specifically I ask why many students who graduate from French immersion programs choose to *speak* in English rather than in their second language while attending a Francophone postsecondary institution. Existential psychologist, Maurice Friedman's model of a *community of affinity* and *of otherness*, frames this study. Grounded in Buber's philosophy of the Interhuman and his Philosophical Anthropology, notions of *dialogue*, *the sphere of the between*, *confirmation*, *uniqueness*, and the *I-Thou/I-It relationship* will be discussed as the basic assumptions underlying Friedman's communal model. In focusing the research problem as one where French immersion students do not *speak* as one might expect them to at the Campus Saint-Jean, Buber's theory of *spokenness* is particularly relevant to this study.

Framing the Study

Maurice Friedman, professor Emeritus of Religious Studies, Philosophy and Comparative Literature at San Diego State University and Co-Director of the Institute for Dialogical Psychotherapy, long considered the world's foremost authority on Martin Buber, has authored, translated and edited dozens of the latter's works. Not only has he translated and interpreted much of Buber's writings but he has expanded on certain notions that the renowned philosopher left, for the most part, in seed. One such idea is Buber's notion of confirmation – or making the other present through authentic meeting (Buber, 1965). In his book *The Confirmation of Otherness,* Friedman expands and deepens this notion by constructing a model of community based in otherness rather than in affinity (Friedman, 1983). With his communal model, Friedman blends Buber's philosophical anthropology with a dialogical psychology in order to lay a philosophical foundation for the argument of communities based in difference rather than ones based in likemindedness. In the next section I present some of Buber's seminal ideas in order to make clear how Friedman built upon these to construct this model.

Buber – Existentialist of Dialogue

Martin Buber is known as an existentialist of dialogue alongside others like Kierkegaard, Heidegger, Sartre and Tillich, all of whom shared an ontological understanding of Man as relational. Over time, Buber contested many of the ideas of the existentialists like Kierkegaard, whom he felt posited, "an exclusive I-Thou relationship between the 'Single One' and God and [left] the relationship between man and man secondary and inessential…[By emphasizing] "the ontological reality of the 'between' and… the possibility of experiencing the other side of the relationship" (Friedman, 1965,

p. xvi). Buber was able to separate himself from all others as he gained recognition by becoming the first to make his ontology of the 'between' "explicit through his philosophical anthropology in his book, *What Is Man?* – and [then] to systematically develop its implications into the philosophy of the Interhuman in *The Knowledge of Man*" (Friedman 1983, p. 3).

According to Friedman (1991) philosophical anthropology can be understood as quite different from cultural anthropology or any other social and human studies such as sociology, psychology, and economics:

> Philosophical anthropology is the one discipline which asks about man as a totality rather than some particular abstraction. It is not concerned merely with describing nor is it concerned only with values and ideals. It wants to know what makes the human human, what is essential to our existence as human persons in direct and indirect relationship with one another and with the environments in which we are set. (p. 226)

From within a philosophical anthropology, Buber was able to move beyond "the old tired polarities of individual versus society, individualism versus collectivism, competition versus cooperation, free enterprise versus socialism, capitalism versus communism, freedom versus social welfare" (Friedman, 1983, p. 277). In his refusal to separate the individual from the collective, Buber's "ontology of the between began from the premise that *all real living is meeting*" (Friedman, 1992, p. 3). Ultimately, a philosophical anthropology is a relational philosophy (Walters, 2003, p. vii) where "the human being's need to form relationships happens when individual selves enter into dialogue with other selves" (Friedman, 1992, p. 5). Within a Buberian framework,

relation is always understood as "cooperation, genuine dialogue, and mutual confirmation" (p. 59).

Buber's Principle of Human Life

Ontologically, Buber (1967) separated the animal realm from the human world by positing that the principle of human life consisted of a twofold movement – the first, which he called 'the primal setting at a distance' and the second that of 'entering into relation'. Buber (1967) compared the animal to a fruit trapped in its own skin – *in* the world but unable to separate itself from it. He felt that Man[3], on the other hand, had the unique capacity to distance himself from the world in which he lived in order to come into relation with it. Buber noted that, "an animal does not know the state of relation because one cannot stand in a relation to something that is not perceived as contrasted and existing for itself" (1967, p. 62). Man who is able to pull himself out of his world in order to look upon it, is different than an "animal's 'image of the world' [which] is nothing more than the dynamic of the presences bound up with one another by bodily memory to the extent required of life which are to be carried out…[an] image [that] depends on [and] clings to the animal's activities" (Buber, 1967, p. 61). According to Buber, it is "only when a structure of being, is independently over against a living being *(Seiende),* an independent opposite, [that] a world exist[s]" (p. 61). Therefore the first movement of 'distancing' or making one's being independent of that which surrounds it, permits the second movement in which, "Man turns to the withdrawn structure of being *(Seiende)* and enters into relation to it" (p. 62).

[3] In German the use of the term 'Mensch' is much more all encompassing than the gendered use of 'Man' in the English language. One should think in terms of 'the image of Man' and not in the narrow gendered sense.

Buber's two movements while closely bound are not simply two parts of the same process but rather "the first creates the presupposition [or possibility] for the other (Buber, 1967, p. 63). Hence Man must choose to engage the second movement through his very beingness. As well, the first movement or 'the primal setting at a distance', was according to Buber, a universal – that is, something that is 'given' to all human beings – while the second movement of 'entering into relation' with that world originates in the personal realm. This means that while all human beings are able to set the world and those in it at a distance, they must decide whether or not they will enter into relation with that which has been set at a distance. It is in this sense that the appearance of the first makes nothing more than room for the second. Hence, it is always possible for us as human beings to refuse to come into relation with that which we have set at a distance, making our relation to others a choice that must be made again and again in every moment. Choosing not to enter into relationship is what allows us to objectify the other.

Buber believed that, "we have in common with all existing beings that we can be made objects of observation. But it is my privilege as man that by the hidden activity of my being I can establish an impassable barrier to objectification" (1967, p. 75). Although it was possible to make the other into an object, Buber felt that, "Man has a great desire to enter into personal relation with things and to imprint on them his relation to them. To use them, even to possess them, is not enough, they must become his in another way, by imparting to them…his relation to them" (p. 66). Buber called the ability to enter into relation with another, an act of *confirmation*. He believed that it was, "the wish of every man to be confirmed as what he is, even as what he can become, by men in this way. That this capacity lies so immeasurably fallow constitutes the real weakness and

questionableness of the human race: actually humanity exists only where this capacity unfolds" (1967, p. 68). Confirmation happens when we are able to make the other present as they truly are and not as we make them out to be. Hence for Buber, "the only thing that matters is that for each of the two men the other happens as the particular other, that each becomes aware of the other and is thus related to him in such a way that he does not regard and use him as his object, but as his partner in a living event" (1967, p. 74).

Ultimately, Buber believed that one individual comes into relation with another individual through an act of speech. All persons, he felt, have in common that they call out to each other, hence, "to speak to others is something essentially human, and is based on the acknowledgment of the independent otherness of the other with whom one fosters relation, addressing and being addressed on this very basis" (1967, p. 68). It was through the spoken word, that Buber formulated what has perhaps become his best known principle: that of the I-Thou and the I-It relationship. He explained this in the following way:

> To man the world is twofold, in accordance with his twofold attitude. The attitude of man is twofold, in accordance with the twofold nature of the primary words which he speaks. The primary words are not isolated words, but combined words. The one primary word is the combination *I-Thou.* The other primary word is the combination *I-It;* wherein, without a change in the primary word, one of the words *He* or *She* can replace *It.* Hence the *I* of man is also twofold. For the *I* of the primary word *I-Thou* is a different *I* from that of the primary word *I-It.* Primary words do not signify things, but they intimate relations. (Herberg, 1956, p. 43)

In his introductory essay to Buber's *The Knowledge of Man,* Friedman (1967) states that the "*I and Thou* begins from experience rather than abstract concepts, experience which points to what is the human in man" (p. 11) and:

> is characterized by mutuality, directness, presentnesss, intensity, and ineffability. Although it is only with this relation that personality and the personal really exist, the Thou of I-Thou is not limited to men, but may include animals, trees, objects of nature, and God. I-It is the primary word of experiencing and using. It takes place within a man and not between him and the world. Hence it is entirely subjective and lacking in mutuality. Whether in knowing, feeling or acting, it is the typical subject-object relationship. It is always mediate and indirect, dealing with objects in terms of the categories and connections, and hence is comprehensible and orderable…The It of I-It may equally be a he, a she, an animal, a thing, a spirit, or even a god. (p. 12)

In his writing, Buber made clear that the I of the I-Thou and the I of the I-It are fundamentally part of the same ontological movement therefore should not be dichotomized. The following metaphor illustrates well, this joint movement:

> The *It* is the eternal chrysalis, the *Thou* the eternal butterfly. What at one moment was the Thou of an I-Thou relationship can become the next moment an It and indeed must continually do so. The It may again become a Thou but it will not be able to remain one, and it need not become a Thou at all. Man can live continuously and securely in the world of It, but if he lives only in this world he is not a man. (Friedman, 1967, p. 12-13)

It is important that one not see the I-Thou movement as 'good' while vilifying the I-It as bad – rather each flows into and out of the other in the constant lived experience of human beings in relation to their world. Ontologically, Buber provided the following example from his own life to illustrate how an experience of the I-Thou came about between himself and 'that which is not human'. The horse which could be understood like any other, was transformed in the I-Thou moment into this particular horse – unique and unlike any other:

> When I was eleven years of age, spending the summer on my grandparents' estate, I used, as often as I could do it unobserved, to steal into the stable and gently stroke the neck of my darling, a broad dapple-grey horse. It was not a casual delight but a great, certainly friendly, but also deeply stirring happening. If I am to explain it now, beginning from the still very fresh memory of my hand, I must say that what I experienced in touch with the animal was the Other, the immense otherness of the Other, which, however, did not remain strange like the otherness of the ox and the ram, but rather let me draw near and touch it. When I stroked the mighty mane, sometimes marvellously smooth-combed, at other times just as astonishingly wild, and felt the life beneath my hand, it was something that was not I, was certainly not akin to me, palpably the other, not just another, really the Other itself; and yet it let me approach, confided itself to me, placed itself elementally in the relation of *Thou* and *Thou* with me. (Buber, 1965, p. 22-23)

These fleeting moments of the I-Thou, Buber believed happened by engaging the other in dialogue or what he called, *speech-with-meaning*, enabling us to know the other in his or her uniqueness. As in the example above, dialogue need not involve words but can be a look, a gesture or a stance. Also Buber felt that not all dialogue was equal and in general he distinguished between three different kinds:

1. *Genuine dialogue* (spoken or silent) "where each of the participants really has in mind the other or others in their present and particular being and turns to them with the intention of establishing a living mutual relation between himself and them".

2. *Technical dialogue* "which is prompted solely by the need of objective understanding."

3. And *monologue* "disguised as dialogue, in which two or more men, meeting in space, speak each with himself in strangely tortuous and circuitous ways" (1965, p. 18).

Buber (1965) further elaborated that in genuine dialogue:

> Neither needs to give up his point of view; only, in that unexpectedly they do something and unexpectedly something happens to them, which is called a covenant, they enter a realm where the law of the point of view no longer holds. They too suffer the destiny of our conditioned nature, but they honour it most highly when as is permitted to us, they let themselves run free of it for an immortal moment. They had already met one another

> when each in his soul so turned to the other that from then making him present, he spoke really to and towards him. (p. 6)

Friedman (1983) later noted that genuine dialogue entails "holding your ground, but also, in opposing the other, confirming his right to stand where he is?" What really matters in genuine dialogue is my acceptance of the "otherness" of the other person, my "willingness to listen to her and respond to her address" (p. 27). Hence dialogue must not be confused simply with speaking or speech. Monologue is also speech but it is speaking *to* someone rather than speaking *with* someone. Monologue, rather than confirming others, silences them by reducing "[them] to a place where [they have] to submit" (p. 266). In the conclusion to his essay "What is Man?" Buber stated that man's uniqueness cannot be found in the individual nor in the collective but in the meeting of the I and Thou – in the sphere of the 'between' (Friedman, 1967, p. 16).

In contrast to the I-Thou, the I-It relationship was characterized for Buber by what he called 'reflexion' as:

> when a man withdraws from accepting with his essential being another person in his particularity – a particularity which is by no means to be circumscribed by the circle of his own self, and though it substantially touches and moves his soul is in no way immanent in it – and lets the other exist only as his own experience, only as a 'part of myself'. For then dialogue become a fiction, the mysterious intercourse between two human worlds only a game. (1965, p. 23-24)

Buber believed that persons engage in 'reflexion' because:

> Each of us is encased in an armour whose task is to ward off signs. Signs happen to us without respite, living means being addressed, we would need only to present ourselves and to perceive. But the risk is too dangerous for us, the soundless thunderings seem to threaten us with annihilation, and from generation to generation we perfect the defence apparatus. All our knowledge assures us, "Be calm, everything happens as it must happen, but nothing is directed at you, you are not meant; it is just 'the world', you can experience it as you like but whatever you make of it in yourself proceeds from you alone, nothing is required of you, you are not addressed, all is quiet." Each of us is encased in an armour which we soon, out of familiarity, no longer notice. There are only moments which penetrate it and stir the soul to sensibility. (1965, p. 10)

Buber noted that the I-It allows the human being to store words "like a tool he has prepared, as objects which are ready for use" giving them an existence of their own and using them against others, therefore cancelling out the possibility of relationship as it were (1967, p. 68). In this sense he was careful to distinguish between "popular discussions which, he felt, misuse the reality of speech" and genuine conversation. Ultimately, Buber believed that genuine conversation - through which we are able to come into relation with each other - is only possible through "an acceptance of otherness" (1967, p. 69). This type of conversation entailed accepting the other even though he or she may hold quite different beliefs and views from my own. As Buber (1967) wrote:

> When two men inform one another of their basically different views about an object, each aiming to convince the other of the rightness of his own

> way of looking at the matter, everything depends so far as human life is concerned, on whether each thinks of the other as the one he is, whether each, that is, with all his desire to influence the other, nevertheless unreservedly accepts and confirms him in his being this man and in his being made in this particular way. The strictness and depth of human individuation, the elemental otherness of the other, is then not merely noted as the necessary starting point, but is affirmed from the one being to the other. (p. 69)

Buber's Theory of Spokenness

From his central thesis on dialogue, emerged Buber's theory of Spokenness. Expanding on his notion of genuine dialogue, whereby one is *confirmed* by the other in his or her uniqueness, Buber deconstructed the dialogical process into what he came to call *spokenness* - a 'speech act' grounded in a double-movement of speaking-with-meaning and deep listening.

Buber often experienced the world as a place of noise where few people ever listened carefully to the other. As he wrote, "waves of the aether roar on always, but for most of the time we have turned off our receivers" (1965, p. 11). Because of this he came to value the act of listening as much as that of speaking and felt that 'confirmation' could only happen when these two acts were present. As Friedman later wrote, "only in real listening – [in being] a listening witness – can [one] plumb the abyss of that existential mistrust that stands in the way of genuine dialogue" (1983, p. 258). It is in this sense, that Buber came to see that it was only when two people were able to sustain the tension between *real speech* and *authentic listening*, that they might enter what he called, *the*

sphere of the between. Here, "two persons 'happen' to each other and the essential remainder that is common to them reaches out beyond the special sphere of each [and for Buber this] remainder was the basic reality, 'the sphere of the between'" (Friedman, 1992, p. 4). Hence, the *between* was understood "as a category of human reality constituted by speaking-and-listening or address-and-response" (Friedman, 1996, p. 158), or what he called, "a phenomenological event of contact-in-speech-and-heard-speech as the oral-aural category of human reality" (p. 159). Reaching the 'between' happens through "real speaking [which] takes place out of tension…[and] speech… is born of a living dynamic. This fruitful essential tension expressed through speech, acts as a stimulus for us to come toward each other" (Friedman, 1991, p. 126) in the space between the I and Thou. Because one cannot enter into relationship with an object, Buber noted that the I-It relationship can never confirm the other in his otherness, thereby prohibiting the unfolding of a space 'between'.

In order to engage the other, Buber (1967) draws our attention to the importance of *being* rather than that of *seeming*:

> the duality of being and seeming…[whereby] the man dominated by being gives himself to the other spontaneously without thinking about the image of himself awakened in the beholder. The 'seeming man', in contrast, is primarily concerned with what the other thinks of him, and produces a look calculated to make himself appear 'spontaneous', 'sincere', or whatever he things will win the other's approval…The tendency toward seeming originates in man's need for confirmation and in his desire to be confirmed falsely rather than not to be confirmed at all. (p. 27-28)

Only persons able to "be" authentic were then able to mutually confirm each other by what Buber called, *imagining the real*. Imagining the real meant that one can "imagine quite concretely what another person is wishing, feeling, perceiving, and thinking. [This] is no empathy or intuitive perception, but a bold swinging into the other which demands the intensest action of one's being in order to make the other present in his wholeness, unity and uniqueness" (Friedman, 1983, p. 7-8). In other words, imagining the 'real' is imagining the other as he or she *really is* rather than as we imagine him or her to be. This step in Buber's thinking grounds much of Friedman's communal model of Otherness, which I speak to later in this chapter.

Finally, through his theory of *Spokenness*, Buber showed that:

> Spoken as opposed to written speech is the great discovery, the great rediscovery, of the life of dialogue. The genuine spoken word is spoken in the context of relationship, of mutuality, and takes its very meaning from the fact that it is said by one person and heard by another who relates to it from an entirely different ground. Speech is the high ground on which the Thou attains its full reality in knowing and being known. (Friedman, 1991, p. 126)

Many agree that Buber's post *I and Thou* work with *Spokenness,* moved him to the forefront of philosophical anthropology in the 1920s and that even though written so long ago, his theories are still considered relevant today. Stewart believes that he laid out:

> an approach to studying humans that was revolutionary in two senses. Like many subsequent postmodern thinkers, Buber broke the shackles of

> subject-object thinking, and he also pointed human scientists to the event of speech communicating as the primary site of human being. (1996, p. 158)

Today there is a strong resonance between hermeneut Hans Georg Gadamer's notion of *conversation* and Buber's understanding of *dialogue.* In his groundbreaking book on hermeneutics, *Truth and Method,* Gadamer writes,

> A conversation is a process of two people understanding each other. Thus it is characteristic of every true conversation that each opens himself to the other person, truly accepts his point of view as worthy of consideration and gets inside the other to understand…what he says. (1975, p. 347)

This closely resembles words, Buber wrote long ago,

> A time of genuine religious conversations is beginning – not those so-called but fictitious conversations where none regarded and addressed his partner in reality, but genuine dialogues, speech from certainty to certainty, but also from one open-hearted person to another open-hearted person. (1965, p. 7)

There are many points in this study where I believe the thinking of both Buber and Gadamer converge.

Imagining the Real

As I intimated at the end of the last section, 'imagining the real' happens only when two people are able to enter into genuine dialogue with each other, in the sphere

that opens between them in the I-Thou. Ultimately, Buber felt that this kind of authentic meeting rarely happens in our world as he noted the human being's natural tendency to assign intentions to the behaviour of another, without necessarily testing these beliefs against the person's actual lived reality. In other words, believing that we know why someone acts the way he or she does, without testing our beliefs against the other's reality, renders us incapable of knowing whether our assumptions about him or her are in fact correct. Untested assumptions lead us to know others only *as we imagine them to be* and not as *they truly are.* When we are able, however briefly, to enter *the sphere of the between* with another through authentic dialogue, our assumptions can potentially be unmasked, enabling us to see the other in his or her true reality or the 'imagined real'.

This is not unlike Gadamer (1975) who noted the problem of unexamined assumptions as that of prejudice or our tendency to:

> hold blindly to our own fore-meaning of the [person] when trying to understand the meaning of another…[Gadamer believes] the important thing is to be aware of one's own bias, so that the [person] may present himself in all his newness and thus be able to assert his own truth against one's own fore-meanings. (p. 238)

Buber felt that knowing the *other* only as we *imagine him or her to be,* leads inevitably to the I-It relationship where "one person treats the other as an object, to be known and used" (Friedman, 1983, p. 6). The I-It, "brings with it its categories [or assumptions] and looks at what fits them… Overlooking the real 'otherness' of the person, leading us to see her "in our own image or in terms of our ready-made categories and not as she really is in her concrete uniqueness" (1983, p. 30). When "other people fix

us in their images of us…we in turn internalize those images and fix ourselves in them…[which] leads one to limit one's sense of what one can do (p. 43). Friedman (1992) calls our "tendency to convert events that happen between ourselves and others into psychological categories, *psychologism*…a habit of mind…[or] the tendency to divide the reality that is given to us into two parts – one [that] is an outer world into which we fit ourselves, and the other… an inner psyche into which we fit the world" (p. 18).

Of course, one of the problems with assumptions and prejudices is that we are often unaware of them. They tend to sit silently in the self, suspended like an invisible curtain before our eyes, distorting how we see the other that stands before us. Friedman (1983) saw the importance of uncovering, "the tension that is already there, so it can be seen and dealt with [because] trying to know, classify, and categorize another leads… us [inevitably] to prejudice, racism, and violence" (p. 265). The fact that I have categorized people in this study as either 'Francophone' or 'Anglophone' might at first glance be seen as problematic by those reading this study. They may feel that in doing this, I am in fact making those at CSJ into objects or 'Its'. What must be understood here is that Buber and Friedman do not say that categorizing or naming is something bad or wrong. As human beings, this 'naming' of things and people cannot be avoided as it is part and parcel of Buber's first movement - as discussed above - as the process of distancing the world from me in order to make it recognizable and understandable to myself. If we were not aware of the common names we affix to different objects and people in the world, the world would not make sense. We do need a common language made up of words, labels and categories but the problem arises when we are not *conscious* of the fact that we are

categorizing. Buber does not condemn the act of categorizing; he simply asks that we transcend the category by becoming aware of the individuals within it. He asks that we do not remain at this first level but that we consciously engage the second movement of seeing the uniqueness of those within the category. Hence, in this study I am consciously aware of the fact that I am categorizing the people at CSJ as Anglophones and Francophones in order to make them 'recognizable' to both myself, to each other, and to the reader. But I also transcend these categories when I make present certain individuals (my participants; myself as Francophone and the particular Francophones who have been involved in keeping the CSJ alive as a Francophone institution see Chapter Two) in this study. This is an example of Buber's narrow ridge, where it is important not to judge the need to categorize as something negative but rather to understand that this categorization is only negative when one is unable to transcend it. Transcending means being able to hold the tension between the two existential movements of the I-Thou and the I-It.

Identity and the I-Thou

In his own work, Friedman (1983) links Buber's I-Thou/I-It principle to current understandings of 'identity'. Friedman's Buberian understanding of identity resolved for me the problem I was having with the notion of identity as **either** fixed and stable **or** socially and historically constructed. Friedman (1983) explains:

> [The] problematic can be grasped most clearly if we look at what we ordinarily take as a self-evident reality and as the foundation of our personal existence – our 'I.' The 'I' is not an object or a thing. Indeed, it escapes all attempts to objectify it. But even as a subjective reality, it is not something continuous, secure, or easily discernible. It is elusive and

> insubstantial, paradoxical and perplexing to the point of illusion or even downright delusion. It cannot be understood as something taken by itself, outside of all relationship, but neither is it part of the whole. It rests on the reality of the 'between,' the interhuman. I cannot regard my 'I' as merely a product of social forces and influences, for then it is no longer an "I". (p.37)

Friedman argues that:

> There has to be that in me which can respond if I am going to talk about any true personal uniqueness. Therefore, I cannot say with George Herbert Mead, "The self is an eddy in the social current." I cannot turn the self into a mere confluence of social and psychological streams. On the other hand, if I speak of the 'I' as an 'essence,' that is misleading because it suggests something substantive that is within us as a vein of gold within a mountain waiting to be mined. (1983, p. 37)

Friedman's notion of identity as the paradox of personhood represents the tension that is held between that which makes us *unique* in regards to all others and that which makes us simultaneously *similar* to all others. When we try to fix others into our own categories or make them into our own image, we are seeing the world from only one point of view, the point of view of 'I' and not 'Thou'. Holding others away from ourselves and never bringing them up close, allows us to make them into objects to observe but with whom we needn't interact or (the I-It). When I am with those whom I feel are similar to me, it is easy to confirm them because it is, in a sense, like confirming my own self. This is why it is no great hardship to be with those who think, dress, speak

and act as I do. On the other hand, being with those who think differently, dress differently, speak differently and act differently can be an uneasy tension for me to manage because I am unsure who they are – as they are 'not like me'. Instinctively, we may perceive 'the other' as a threat or a danger to us, or so we imagine. But this fear often manifests itself before we have actually met the other person in his or her reality. Once we have placed people into 'imagined' categories, we come to believe that we do in fact know them – that we have the truth about them. But as Friedman (1983) notes, ultimately it is our ability to live alongside those most unlike ourselves [that] is the true test of being able to confirm the other in his or her radical otherness.

Conceptualizing the I-Thou

The paradox of identity and relationality is that the **(I)** or my sense of who I am as a unique individual, must first stand separate from all others **(Thou)** so that I don't lose myself to that which is other. From my own uniqueness then I can move toward the other **(I →Thou)** without giving up who I am, as I try to discover who the other is in his or her reality. I can then come to know you for who you really are and vice versa. Those who are desperate to be accepted by the other will often opt for a 'pseudoharmony' by attempting to *become* just like the other and in the process, lose their sense of self. Here there is a collapsing of the tension between that which is **I** and that which is **Thou** - (I~Thou) - where **(I)** attempt to become **(You)**. The opposite of this situation would be where **(I)** imagine **(Thou)** as **(I)** – in other words, I imagine you only from the point of view of my **(I)**. Of course this 'imagining' is always false since it is never checked against the actual reality of the other. This is an example of Buber's I-It relationship, where one person, through their **(I)**, objectifies the other as another **(I)** - as in I make you

into what I *think* you are and not who you know you are. Of course the healthy (I-Thou) relationship happens when **I** move toward **Thou** in order to find out, that which makes **Thou** unique. In response **Thou** moves toward **I** in order to discover what makes me unique (I↔Thou). Finding out who the other is in his or her reality without losing my sense of self can only happen in tension, which often entails a certain amount of conflict and frustration.

The existential tension between self fulfillment and concern for the Other, Buber called *walking the narrow ridge*. Friedman (1983) uses Buber's metaphor of the 'narrow ridge' in highlighting postmodernist's resistance to oversimplified dichotomies and the human being's seemingly natural need to name, categorize, judge and reduce the world to its smallest parts. By taking a stance 'on the ridge' Friedman, like Buber, strive to see the world as one of intersubjectivity rather than one of the persons "knowing the other only as the 'not-me,' [or] the person 'over there' in relation to [his] 'being here'" (Friedman 1983, p. 10). It is important to understand that this tension is part and parcel of the **I↔Thou** relationship and must not be traded in for harmony and tolerance. It is only in this type of productive tension that both people can keep who they are *intact* as well as come to know the other in his or her true reality - Buber referred to this as the ability to *confirm* each other in our otherness - the process of *inclusion.*

Buber applied his I-Thou principle to groups, communities and nations in order to explain how perceiving the other as It inevitably leads to racism, sexism and the inability of nations to live alongside each other. Friedman (1983), expanding on Buber's notion of the confirmation of otherness, applies the I-Thou/I-It principle to understand how

different groups come to dwell in either *communities of affinity* or in *communities of otherness.*

The Community of Affinity

Friedman notes that within a Buberian philosophy, "the ultimate issue of the life of dialogue is community – lived togetherness of really unique persons, families, and groups" (1983, p. 136). From an anthropological perspective, it is well known that it is the human being's nature to seek to gather in groups of likeminded people, or what has been called 'homophily' (Lazarsfeld, 1954; Rogers & Bhowmik, 1970; Touchey, 1974; Desehields & Kara, 2000; Jin, 2002; Conner & Clawson, 2004). The tendency toward homophilous relationships has been noted as far back as Aristotle (1934: 1371) who stated that people tend to, "Love those who are like themselves" and Plato (1968: 837) who noted that, "Similarity begets friendship." The notion of homophily is, according to Touchey (1974), the degree to which people have similar attributes, beliefs and values. According to Jin (2002):

> When…individuals share common meanings, belief, and mutual understandings, communication between them is more likely to be effective. Individuals enjoy the comfort of interacting with others who are similar. Talking with those who are markedly different from us requires more effort to make communication effective…The proverbial expression of homophily, "Birds of a feather flock together" has been used to summarize the empirical pattern". (n.p)

In French we say, "*Ceux qui se ressemblent – s'assemblent*" to illustrate this tendency. Whether this togetherness takes the form of family, school, nation or religion – ultimately Friedman says, community – "offers us protection against otherness" (1983, p. 133). The need to surround ourselves with those most like ourselves is nowhere more obvious than in our desire to "have a house in which to dwell…a home" (p. 133). The home offers us the ultimate sense of protection from the outside world. In chapter two of this study, I presented the Faculté Saint-Jean as having been historically constructed as this type of 'home' - where Francophones have long attempted to protect themselves from being assimilated into the surrounding Anglophone majority. Although the perception of being 'protected' from the Other is reassuring – it is nonetheless an illusion. Even though we might want to close ourselves off from the outside world, Friedman (1983) argues that, "Man's house does not stand in splendid isolation…but must stand between neighboring houses, the houses of his neighbors" (p. 134). The paradoxical need to both actualize one's *self* while living alongside *different* others, is the existential tension that underlies communal living:

> Each human being needs to have a home, a house, a ground that she can call her own, a lifespace in which to show forth the unique life-stance of this particular human being and this particular family. Yet every human being and every family needs to the same degree to have community with others, interaction and dialogue from home to home and from house to house. (Friedman 1983, p. 135)

When people find themselves on the razor sharp edge between those who are known and those who are not, there is the natural tendency to want to lessen this tension

by choosing the simpler and more harmonious path of living with likeminded others in what Friedman (1983) calls *communities of affinity.* The community of affinity or of *like-mindedness* is "based in what people feel they have in common – race, sex, religion, nationality, politics, a common formula, a common creed" (p. 133). Wherever groups of likeminded people gather, there is the natural tendency to want to keep those who are different out. The tendency to construct communities of affinity reflects, Friedman believes "our lack of trust, our existential mistrust, [making] us feel that we need…the security of likeminded groups, groups based on generalized affinity, rather than the concreteness of open meeting with real otherness that is present in every group" (1983, p. 137).

Ultimately, communities of affinity are based in a "fear of otherness, mistrust, self-involvement, mutual exploitation, categorization and fixing people in social roles, anxiety about discomfirmation, seeming, and a host of others" (1983, p. 281). Friedman believes that "it is the fear of otherness – of allowing otherness a voice and even acknowledging its existence – which stands in the way of communities of affinity moving into communities of otherness" (p. 278). In the present study, I wondered how the actual construction of the community at Campus Saint-Jean was contributing to the French immersion students' hesitation to speak in French. Friedman's notion of a community of affinity allowed me to imagine both the CSJ and the French immersion context as separate communities based in affinity rather than in otherness.

Recognizing the Community of Affinity

Even though this study is framed by Friedman's communal model, I felt that his notion of communities of affinity remained somewhat abstract and theoretical. I wanted

to identify 'specific' and 'concrete' criteria with which to deconstruct and reconstruct both the Francophone and the French Immersion communities at CSJ. In order to achieve this, I decided to combine Friedman's communal model with Lugones' (2003) critical feminist theory of 'World-Travel' and her four criteria of at-easeness. With the help of participants' comments, I was able to construct a theoretical model to illustrate how both communities are ones based in affinity and likemindedness rather than in otherness. In the following section, I present Lugones' (2003) critical feminist theory of World-Travel.

Failure of Identification as the I-it

Lugones (2003), a modern political philosopher and critical feminist, grounds much of her theories in an understanding of "coloured" women as oppressed and held apart by those inhabiting mainstream white worlds. Although many of her ideas are of a political nature, she shares an ontological understanding with both Buber and Friedman of what it means to be 'other.' Her notion of white women's failure to identify with the woman of colour, echoes nicely with many of Buber's fundamental notions of dialogue and relationality. In speaking to this failure, Lugones (2003) states that white women, "ignore us, ostracize us, render us invisible, stereotype us, leave us invisible [and] leave us completely alone" (p. 83). From a Buberian framework, this rendering the other invisible can be understood as an inability to confirm the other in his or her particular uniqueness. Lugones speaks of an 'arrogant perception' which she borrows from Frye (1983) who sees the act of perceiving arrogantly, as one where you perceive that others are for yourself and thereby proceed to appropriate their substance to yours (Frye, 1983). Arrogant perception renders the other an It, in Buberian language, echoing Buber's notion of 'reflexion':

> I term it reflexion when a man withdraws from accepting with is essential being another person in his particularity – a particularity which is by no means to be circumscribed by the circle of his own self, and though it substantially touches and moves his soul is in no way immanent in it – and lets the other exist only as his own experience, only as a 'part of myself'. (1965, p. 24)

Seeing the other from one's own subjectivity and not from a 'reaching out across' a mutual space, creates Buber's I-It; rendering a person able to objectify the other. In this study, I use Lugones' concept of 'worlds' in a somewhat different way than she herself does. While she uses this concept "against the grain of atomic, homogeneous, and monistic understandings of the social" (2003, p. 26), I start from exactly this point. Beginning from an understanding of 'worlds' as atomistic and homogeneous allowed me to conceptualize the notion of a community of affinity (Friedman, 1983) as groups of people who gather together in order to gaze outwards upon others as that which is 'not them'. Lugones' (2003) intention to use the notion of, "World-traveling as one way of keeping oneself focused on resistance," (p. 7) more closely resembles Friedman's notion of a 'community of otherness,' which I address later on in the study. In a sense, I begin at the beginning, by attempting to understand the construction of a community of affinity before recommending a move to a community based in otherness.

Lugones' World-Travel

I use the following definition provided by Lugones (2003) to explain what I mean by a 'world' as I draw a parallel to Friedman's community of affinity:

> For something to be a "world" in my sense, it has to be inhabited at present by some flesh and blood people…[It] may be an actual society, given its dominant culture's description and construction of life, including a construction of the relationships of production, of gender, race, etc….A "world" need not be a construction of a whole society. It may be inhabited by just a few people. Some "worlds" are bigger than others. (p. 87-88)

Lugones links our ability to love another (especially those most unlike ourselves) to our ability to travel to their world. She believes that in order to truly *love* another, one must be able to see with their eyes; go into their 'world' in order to witness their own sense of themselves from within their particular 'world' and this she says can only be gained through traveling to the world of the other or what she calls through, 'World-Travel'. In Lugones' notion of *love*, we see much of Buber's 'imagining the real,' whereby I am able to imagine to myself "what another man is at this very moment wishing, feeling, perceiving, thinking, and not as a detached content but in his very reality" (1967, p. 70). Traveling to each others' 'worlds' allows us, according to Lugones, "to *be* through loving each other" (2003, p. 86). Again this resonates with Buber (1967) and his contrasting notions of *being* and *seeming* – where *being*, "in the interhuman realm… means that men communicate themselves to one another as what they are…letting no seeming creep in between himself and the other (p. 77)…seeing his partner as the very one he is" (p. 79).

In traveling to the world of the other, Lugones believes that it is important to "cross, to go through, in uncertainty…[since] it is the openness to uncertainty that enables one to find in others one's own possibilities and theirs" (p. 26). Fear, she believes

is part and parcel of this 'crossing', as within this crossing to another's world, "there is an impending sense of loss; loss of competence and loss of a clear sense of oneself and one's relations to others" (p. 27). In the current study, I look to understand how graduates of a French immersion program experience this possible sense of loss and feelings of fear when they 'crossed' to the world of Campus Saint-Jean.

In her work with World-Travel, Lugones (2003, p. 90) elaborated four criteria for determining one's sense of being at ease in different worlds.

Lugones' Four Criteria of At-Easeness

1. Being a *fluent speaker* in that "world"– Here I know all the norms that are to be followed. I know all the words that there are to be spoken. I know all the moves. Therefore I feel confident speaking in this particular community.

2. Being *normatively happy*. Here I agree with all the norms. I could not love any norms better. I am asked to do just what I want to do or what I think I should do. I am at ease in this one community and the knowing and agreeing with these norms helps me know how to behave appropriately.

3. Being *humanly bonded*. I am with those I love and they love me, too. It should be noticed that I may be with those I love and be at ease because of them in a "world" that is otherwise as hostile to me as "worlds" get.

4. Having a *shared daily history*. This may be a shared history amongst a specific group who share the same traditions, beliefs and historical ancestral lines. Or it may also be that I know the same things the people around me know. We can talk because we have things in common – this may be popular culture, music

preferences, shared likes and dislikes, for instance. It is where we remember the same things and can ask each other questions like, "Do you remember poodle skirts?" and be understood.

Lugones explains that a person may privilege one world over another for a variety of reasons. For example, I may experience myself as an agent in a fuller sense in one world, than I do in another world. I may also disown a 'world' because I feel thoroughly dominated in it and have no sense of exercising my own will there. Or yet again, in this particular world, I have great difficulties in performing actions that are willed by others there (2003, p. 91).

In this study, I used Lugones' four criteria of 'at-easeness' in a slightly different way than she herself might use them. In a less complex way, I equated higher levels of at-easeness in a world (that I now will call community) – the greater the likelihood that we are amongst those most like ourselves. I then apply these criteria to construct both the French immersion school and the Campus Saint-Jean as *communities of affinity* as per Friedman's definition.

In the next section, I briefly discuss Friedman's alternative to the community of affinity – the *community of otherness* which I again expand on in the last chapter of this study.

Friedman's Community of Otherness

Heterophily (Lazersfeld, 1954), which is the opposite of homophily, can be understood as the degree to which people are different in attributes, values, beliefs etc. from each other (Jin, 2002). Jin notes that:

> Talking with those who are markedly different from us requires more effort to make communication effective. Heterophilous communication between dissimilar individuals may also cause cognitive dissonance because an individual is exposed to messages that are inconsistent with existing beliefs, resulting in an uncomfortable psychological state". (2002, n.p.)

Because of the potential difficulties in relating to those unlike ourselves, Friedman believes that only "where there is a climate of trust [are] there resources to relate to otherness" (1983, p. 133). Existential trust is the cornerstone upon which Friedman builds his notion of a *community of otherness,* "where not everyone does the same thing and [where they certainly do not do it] from the same point of view" (1983, p. 135). He explains that a *community* based in *otherness* rather than in *affinity* is a "living togetherness" (p. 280)..."a caring community...one in which each shares with and cares about the other members of the community and the community as a whole (1983, p. 278). It is always:

> polyphonic, it is many-voiced... In real community, the voice of the minority culture is heard because real community creates an atmosphere of trust which cares about this voice and enables it to be heard. Dialogue means the meeting with the other person, the other group, the other culture – a meeting that confirms the other yet does not deny oneself and the ground on which one stands. Our choice is not *between* ourselves and the other; for genuine dialogue is at once a confirmation of community *and* of otherness. The community of otherness means the willingness to live and

> work even with those who are not 'like-minded,' those who do not share our cultures and our worldviews. (p. 235-36)

Friedman (1983) sees the confirmation of otherness as the only meaningful direction for society within a democracy. It is the act of confirming the other in his otherness (also referred to as *inclusion*) that ultimately builds the community of otherness. A community of otherness is never a closed one. To continue to grow in its otherness it must have its own ground and center, to be sure, but it must also be in open dialogue with individuals and communities outside itself. The search for the 'blessed community' is ultimately an illusion, whether it expresses itself in the form of a community of affinity, or like-mindedness, a church or cult, or a commune that shuts itself off from the rest of society (p. 279).

In this study, I construct the argument that both the French immersion context and the Campus Saint-Jean are communities based in affinity and like-mindedness rather than in difference and otherness. In the next chapter I present the research approach used in the study; that of an interpretive case study.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH APPROACH

Introduction

Through an interpretive case study, I attempted to understand the experiences of three graduates from French immersion programs at Campus Saint-Jean, a Francophone postsecondary institution. A second goal of this study was to ask why these students often choose to speak in English at CSJ rather than use French, their second language. In this chapter I situate the study within a qualitative constructivist research paradigm.

Post-Positivist and Constructivist Paradigms

Researchers like Guba and Lincoln (1998) believe that, "Questions of method are secondary to questions of paradigm, which we define as the basic belief system or worldview that guides the investigator, not only in choices of method but in ontologically and epistemologically fundamental ways" (p. 105).

> The term *positivism* denotes the "received view" that has dominated the formal discourse in the physical and social sciences for some 400 years, whereas *postpositivism* represents efforts of the past few decades to respond in a limited way (that is while remaining within essentially the same set of basic beliefs) to the most problematic criticisms of positivism. (Guba and Lincoln, 1998, p. 108)

Several alternative paradigms have emerged since the 1980s to counter the post-positivist hegemony: neo-Marxist ideologies, feminist critiques and participatory

inquiries are but a few which can be subsumed under the term 'critical theories.' Critical theory itself can be further divided into the three substrands of post-structuralism, postmodernism, and a blending of the two (Guba & Lincoln, 1998, p. 109). Guba and Lincoln further group these positions under the single category of 'constructivism' which "denotes an alternative paradigm whose breakaway assumption is the move from ontological realism to ontological relativism" (1998, p. 109).

> *Constructivism* can be understood as an ontology where "realities are apprehendable in the form of multiple, intangible mental constructions, socially and experientially based, local and specific in nature…and dependent for their form and content on individual persons or groups holding the constructions. Constructions are not more or less "true," in any absolute sense but simply more or less informed and/or sophisticated. (Guba & Lincoln, 1998, p. 110)

This constructivist ontology is congruent with the Buberian lens that frames this study in their constant striving to adhere to the concrete. As Buberian scholar Friedman notes, "No abstract code is valid in advance of particular situations. None has universal validity because value does not exist in the universal at all, but in the particular, the concrete, the interhuman" (Friedman, 1996, p. 27). This is also congruent with Gadamer's (1975) distinction between a strictly theoretical knowledge and a "practical knowledge [or] phronesis… knowledge that is primarily directed towards the concrete situation" (p. 21).

Buber's thoughts on dialogue, dialectics and existential trustworthiness, all grounded in the concrete lived experiences of Man, reflect a closeness to

phenomenological hermeneutics and postmodern philosophers like, Jurgen Habermas, Karl Otto Apel, Paul Ricoeur, Richard Rorty and Charles Taylor all of whom have "enveighed against a physics of envy of positivist social science and have proposed alternative perspectives and approaches" (Friedman, 1996, p. 156). It is here that I see a special affinity between Buber and Gadamer, especially in the sense that both strongly resist providing an explicit methodology to frame their thinking. Further on, I will apply Buber's philosophy of the Word in order to expand Gadamer's interest in written texts to include an *oral-aural* dimension. I will also use Buber's notion of *resonance* to reinforce Gadamer's discussion of validity, which some like Stewart (1996) see as a weak point in Gadamerian theorizing.

Finally, epistemologically, within a constructivist perspective "the investigator and the object of investigation are assumed to be interactively linked so that "findings" are *literally created* as the investigation proceeds" (Guba & Lincoln, 1998, p. 111). Here:

> the variable and personal nature of social constructions suggests that individual constructions can be elicited and refined only through interaction *between and among* investigator and respondents. These varying constructions are interpreted using conventional hermeneutical techniques, and are compared and contrasted through a dialectical interchange. (Guba & Lincoln, 1998, p. 111)

The notion of my entering into relation with my participants was of primary importance in this study. I attempted to live both Gadamer's (1975) statement that, "a conversation is a process of two people understanding each other" (p. 347) as well as

constantly striving to meet my participants in Buber's "unfolding sphere of the between" (Friedman, 1983, p. xii).

Whole to Part Relationship

One of the things that most distinguishes a *constructivist* paradigm from a *post-positivistic one* is its 'holistic' nature. In postmodern terms a 'whole to part' relationship is advocated over the positivists' tendency of breaking the whole into its smallest parts and analyzing these without taking into consideration the whole from which they came.

According to Friedman (1992):

> The natural scientific approach applies an analytic process that breaks down the whole into its elements or parts, whereas the approach to the human sciences would understand the whole as part of a larger-structured context. The actual and the present would become then the point of departure for uncovering relationships, contexts, and meaning. Natural science considers man as *part of the world* but studies him without reference to his intentional relations to the world. The human sciences recognize that man is also one for *whom the world exists.* (p. 10)

This difference between an analytic process and understanding the whole is an important distinction as it reflects how various researchers understand the world and those within it. From a constructivist perspective, Lincoln and Guba (1985) state, "realities are wholes and cannot be understood in isolation from their contexts, nor can they be fragmented for separate study of the parts" (p. 39). It is in this sense that the participants in this study cannot be understood 'outside' of the contexts in which they

dwell – neither the French immersion community they just left nor the new community they recently entered at the Campus Saint-Jean. This need to understand 'in context' is in contrast to the post-positivist agenda of 'reductionism' where positivistic methodologies have often not seen the world as a whole but rather have tended to dissect it into its' smallest parts. This striving toward wholeness is nowhere more evident than in Buber's philosophy of the Interhuman:

> only as a partner can man be perceived as an existing wholeness as person defined by spirit: to perceive the dynamic center which stamps on all his utterances, actions and attitudes the recognizable sign of uniqueness. Such an awareness is impossible if, and so long as, the other is for me the detached object of my observation; for he will not thus yield his wholeness and its center. It is possible only when he becomes present for me. (Friedman, 1983, p. 7)

It is also a central feature of Gadamer's (1975) *Truth and Method* where he develops "a concept of knowledge and of truth which corresponds to the whole of our hermeneutic experience" (p. xiii).

Qualitative Research and Second Language Studies

Not unlike the post-positivist's tendency to devalue constructivist-based research projects, "the general ethos of the second language enterprise has tended to subsume personal experiential elements to a predominantly cognitive core" (Luzio-Lockett, 1998, p. 221). And even with the advent of what Gee (2000) has called the "Social Turn" in language studies, with its move from acquisition models of learning to participatory ones,

many of these lenses remain at the level of theoretical knowledge as in 'motivational studies' and 'theories of agency' rather than more practical and hermeneutic types of knowing. It is in this sense that this study seeks to understand second language learners as "members of social and historical collectives" (Norton, 2000, p. 129) and not simply as those speaking a language as a cognitive and disconnected act.

Qualitative studies within a constructivist perspective, understood as fundamentally 'holistic,' drew me away from post-positivistic cognitive models, frameworks and methodologies, even those that purported to be 'participatory' in nature, but that in accordance with a constructivist postmodern perspective remain wedged within a technocratic model of language learning. I feel that in choosing to use a qualitative interpretive model of research rather than a socio-cultural or sociolinguistic one, I am moving the research that has been and is being done in French immersion education to a more experiential, relational and comprehensive level, where graduates of these programs attempt to make sense of their lives as they continue to pursue their second language after high school. This existential lens I feel will extend and expand knowledge in both the field of Second Language Acquisition and that of French immersion studies. As Guba and Lincoln (1998) state:

> A resolution of paradigm differences can occur only when a new paradigm emerges that is more informed and sophisticated than any existing one. That is most likely to occur if and when proponents of these several points of view come together to discuss their differences not to argue the sanctity of their views. Continuing dialogue among paradigm proponents of all stripes

will afford the best avenue for moving toward a responsive and congenial relationship. (p.108)

It is in this spirit that a Buberian-Gadamerian perspective can help *humanize* research in the areas of Second Language Acquisition and French Immersion by deepening our understandings of the experiences of those who strive not only to learn a second language but to live in it as fully as possible.

Qualitative Research

Specifically, this study is undertaken within a constructivist, interpretive, hermeneutic, naturalistic paradigm. In contrast to the positivist and post-positivist eras, the post-modern period attempts to hold the tension between notions of quality and quantity; understanding and explaining; naturalistic descriptions and the presentation of well laid out facts; discovery and control; meaning and sure answers; interpretation and factual knowing.

The following five features of qualitative research presented by Bogdan and Biklen (1992, p. 29) further illustrate the congruency between the present study and a qualitative research paradigm:

1. Qualitative research has the natural setting as the direct source of data and the researcher is the key instrument.

In order to conduct this study, I lived in the field not only as a researcher but as a teacher and colleague as well. I was, in other words, immersed in the daily flow of life in this setting, living alongside students as they struggled to make sense of their experiences in the community of Saint-Jean. I integrated my research questions into my teaching and

discussed in depth with my students some of the issues that were emerging as I conducted this study. I am grateful to all the students who came through my classes while I worked on this study, as they helped clarify for me many of the questions I was asking.

I must agree with Bogdan and Biklen (1992) who have said, "I feel that action can best be understood when it is observed in the setting within which it occurs" (p. 30). In the case of the Campus Saint-Jean, it is also important that this particular setting be "understood in the context of the history of the institution of which [French Immersion graduates] are a part" (p. 30). In order to do so, I needed to position myself in this study as one who had extensive knowledge and experience on the Saint-Jean landscape and who could speak as an 'insider' to the inner workings of this place.

2. Qualitative research is descriptive.

One of the main distinctions between qualitative and quantitative studies is that in qualitative research "the data collected are in the form of words or pictures rather than numbers" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, p. 30). In this study, the data is presented as anecdotal narratives which serve to describe situations, people, contexts, norms, values, beliefs and attitudes that construct both Saint-Jean and French immersion communities. According to Smith (n.d.) "from a pedagogical point of view, a dogmatic suspicion of narrativizing should itself be held suspect, if only because it is through the activity of sense making, in which narrativizing and story-telling are key ingredients, that human beings constitute themselves socially and communally" (n. p.). What was most important in this study was my ability to enter into authentic dialogue with my participants in order to breach the individual barriers between us where "the other becomes present not merely

in the imagination or feeling but in the depths of one's substance, so that one experiences the mystery of the other being in the mystery of one's own" (Friedman, 1983, p. 4).

3. Qualitative researchers are concerned with process rather than simply with outcomes or products.

The importance of understanding French Immersion graduates through their lived experiences in this new community entails understanding them from the inside, in other words, going beneath their outer actions. In order to do this not only did I have to understand them but I had to understand my own assumptions in regards to why they were acting as they were at the Campus Saint-Jean. Once I was able to sit down and ask my participants why, where and when they felt the need to speak in English when they were at Saint-Jean, I came to see that my own assumptions had been mostly inaccurate in regards to their behaviours and intentions. This is the lived experience of Gadamer's hermeneutic spiral – bringing one's assumptions to the forefront again and again, juxtaposing these with participants' responses and coming away with different understandings than the ones I began with.

4. Qualitative researchers tend to analyze their data inductively.

Contrary to positivistic research methodologies that begin with certain hypotheses and go on to validate these, qualitative studies collect data and allow understandings of the research problem and questions to emerge from these. In other words, the goal of this type of exploratory and descriptive study is to generate propositions or hypotheses rather than to confirm them.

5. "Meaning" is of essential concern to the qualitative approach.

As a researcher I realized that it was not only my goal to make meaning of what my participants were telling me, but in a reciprocal movement I needed to help them make meaning of their own experiences on this landscape. When I began this study, not only did I think 'I knew' why students were speaking English when they should be speaking French but I thought they knew. Through genuine dialogue I came to realize that they were confused and unsure themselves as to why they felt the need to speak in English at CSJ. I believe that our conversations and the things that I have discovered in dialogue with these students has helped, not only my participants, but the French immersion students in my courses to understand why they may be choosing to speak in their first language rather than in their second. I feel that being able to better understand what may be happening to them 'in the bigger picture' has enabled these students to make sense of their experiences. It is in this sense that my research procedures highlighted that, "qualitative researchers are concerned with what are called *participant perspectives*" Bogdan & Biklen 1992, p. 32).

Case Study

This research was conducted as a case study. According to Ellis (1997), "almost every [qualitative] research study can be understood as a **case study**" (p. 1). Case study

> is an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a bounded phenomenon such as a program, institution, person, process or social unit. Its end product takes the form of a descriptive narrative, an interpretive account, or an evaluation. The knowledge produced in a case study research is judged in terms of how understandable and applicable it is. (p. 2)

A case study design was well suited to my research concerns since I was looking at a single entity – the experience of French Immersion graduates in a particular setting (the Campus Saint-Jean) – which can be considered a "unit around which there are boundaries" (Merriam, 1998, p. 27). Seeing that the experience of French Immersion graduates cannot be severed from the 'communities' in which they find themselves, a case study design is particularly well suited to such a situation where it is impossible to separate the phenomenon's variables from their context (Yin, 1994). According to Merriam (1998), "A case might also be selected because it is intrinsically interesting; a researcher could study it to achieve as full an understanding of the phenomenon as possible" (p. 28). As someone who teaches French Immersion graduates at the Campus Saint-Jean, I was deeply interested in trying to understand the experiences of these students. Since most studies of French Immersion students have been outcome oriented, situated within a post-positivist paradigm, I felt that this type of qualitative case study could provide deeper insight into the experiences of these students as well as a fuller understanding of the difficulties they face at the Campus Saint-Jean when they exit one community and enter a new one.

One can say much the same thing of case study as is said about qualitative research in general. First, case study research is *particularistic* in that it focuses:

> on a particular situation, event, program, or phenomenon. The case itself is important for what it reveals about the phenomenon and for what it might represent. This specificity of focus makes it an especially good design for practical problems – for questions, situations, or puzzling occurrences arising from everyday practice. (Merriam, 1998, p. 29)

Second, the case study is *descriptive* in that "the end product of a case study is rich, "thick" description of the phenomenon under study. *Thick description* "is a term from anthropology [which] means the complete, literal description of the incident or entity being investigated" (Merriam, 1998, p. 29). These descriptions took the form of narratives because as Denzin and Lincoln (1994) note, "subjects or individuals are seldom able to give full explanations of their actions or intentions; all they can offer are accounts, or stories about what they did and why" (p. 12). As my participants described their experiences to me, both on the French immersion landscape that they had recently exited and in the new community they entered at the CSJ, I began to get a clearer picture of the fundamental difficulties they faced as they tried to enter a community that was very different from the previous one they had known. In the sense that Connelly and Clandinin (1988) state, "narrative is a study of how humans make meaning of experience by telling and retelling stories about themselves that both refigure the past and create purpose in the future" (p. 24). Through their telling and retelling of their stories, a complex picture of the students' struggles and tensions on this new landscape emerged.

Third, the case study is *heuristic* in that it illuminates, "the reader's understanding of the phenomenon under study...[and] can bring about the discovery of new meaning, extend the reader's experience, or confirm what is known" (Merriam, 1998, p. 29).

As there are so few studies that look at the experiences of French Immersion graduates once they leave high school, this study is particularly important to those post-secondary institutions that seek to provide a context where French immersion students can sustain and improve their second language. In this sense, case study research is particularly valuable "for addressing problems in which understanding is sought to

improve practice" (Ellis, 1997, p. 2) and "insights gleaned from case studies can directly influence policy, practice, and future research (Merriam, 1998, p. 19). In this study, not only did insights emerge about participants' lives at the Campus Saint-Jean, but a clearer picture of the French immersion program's strengths and weaknesses was also gained. It is hoped that these insights can be valuable tools with which to examine some of the practices that are endorsed in the French immersion program, especially at the high school level. It also raises the issue of how we can best help students who wish to pursue their studies in French after high school, do so with less difficulty.

Interpretive Case Studies

This case study is interpretive in the sense that it was my intention to focus on the "intentional, meaningful behavior of people and the interpretations people give to their own behavior and that of others" (Smith, 1999, p. 137). In other words, it was my goal to understand the meaning that my participants gave to their lived-experience at the Campus Saint-Jean and how they attempted to interpret this, always keeping in mind that there is always more than one possible interpretation. Philosophical hermeneutics, as first introduced by Gadamer (1975), "has clarified that there is no reality "out there," no meaning or knowledge waiting to be disclosed to the "mind's eye," until the act of understanding brings it into being" (Ellis, 1998, p. 7). Therefore within such an interpretive perspective I did not seek an "objective reality" nor did I believe that there was one correct interpretation since "perception is interpretation and each person perceives from a different vantage point and history" (Ellis, 1998, p. 8). Even at the end of this study, I am cognizant that those who read my interpretations may interpret

findings somewhat differently than I have done. Within an interpretive paradigm, this is to be expected and accepted.

Interpretive case study, grounded in a qualitative research paradigm, reflects the movement from "a natural scientific preoccupation with 'explaining' to humanities' interest in 'understanding'" (Ellis, 1998, p. 7). To seek to 'understand' is again closely related to hermeneutics as "a theory of understanding…and of self-understanding".

According to Smith (1999), hermeneutics:

> is best described as 'conversation', out of which can be shown what it is we now have in common by virtue of having shared our horizons of understanding. Indeed, all understanding takes place in the context of a pre-given horizon, which serves as the basis upon which anything new can be registered and taken into consideration. Sometimes it is called the "fore-structure" of understanding. Gadamer also called it "prejudice" or "pre-judgment". When we meet, if we are to understand each other at all, somehow I have to open my horizon/prejudice/fore-structure to yours and vice-versa. (p. 2)

In Buberian terms Gadamer's horizon can be understood as two people meeting in the *sphere between* through meaningful dialogue.

Pre-understandings and Hermeneutics

As I wrote at the beginning of this dissertation, perhaps the most important finding was my own transformation. I began this study with many pre-conceptions about the French immersion students at the Campus Saint-Jean. These pre-conceptions had to be

brought forward through the fore-structure of the hermeneutic circle or spiral, because if remaining unacknowledged they had the potential to skew my interpretation of what I heard and saw. As Smith (1993) says, "what one brings to the interpretation of the expressions of others shapes not only one's understanding of the intentions and motivations that stand behind these expressions, but also one's understanding of the intentions and motivations that stand behind one's own expressions" (p. 183). Boostrom (1994) adds that "it is impossible for any human observer to exist without concepts, though the concepts are often tacit rather than acknowledged" (p. 52). This of course is resonant with Buber's I-it relational principle, which "brings with it its categories and looks only at what fits them" (Friedman, 1983 p. 174). It also speaks to the need to unearth and examine these assumptions before they lead us to fix others in these categories in the first place (Friedman, 1983). Below, I present a number of assumptions that I held about French immersion students at CSJ before beginning this study. In a later chapter I discuss how engaging my participants in genuine dialogue enabled me to test these beginning assumptions against my participants' lived realities. By making my own process transparent, I will show how entering the sphere of the between with my participants allowed me to understand them in their uniqueness rather than as the category of the 'French immersion student'.

My Assumptions about French Immersion Students

1) **French immersion students come to the Campus Saint-Jean B. Ed. program because they know they will get a job teaching French when they graduate.**

2) **French immersion students are not committed to the French language.**

3) **French immersion students are aware of their limited abilities in French when they arrive at the Campus Saint-Jean.**

4) **French immersion students don't care that the Francophones want their institution to remain French.**

5) **French immersion students are aware of our French Canadian hi(stories) and the storylines of survival and protectionism that run through them.**

6) **French immersion students need to perform in their coursework at the same level as their Francophone counterparts.**

7) **French immersion students have a specific identity that can be named.**

In Chapter 7, I will revisit these assumptions and demonstrate how through the dialogical hermeneutic process of the hermeneutic spiral I came to see the behaviours and intentions of my participants much differently.

Participants

The study was bounded in the following way: Three volunteer participants were selected based on their having completed a (K-12) French Immersion program and who were entering the third year of post-secondary studies in a BEd or BEd (after degree) program at the Campus Saint-Jean. In a qualitative case study, one is less concerned about participants being representative of the category than about the quality of each participant. This, because we are not looking to generalize to a population at this point, but rather are looking for participants that have had significant experiences (related to our study) that are likely to inform our research. In-depth interviews and research notes

generate a large amount of data and can easily become overwhelming to the researcher. For this reason it is important to choose participants well and to begin with a limited number in order to manage data collection. If more data is needed as the study progresses, more participants can then be added (this did not turn out to be necessary). In April 2005, I explained my study to two different classes of students at the Campus Saint-Jean and invited any students who fit the aforementioned criteria to participate in my study. I chose the first three volunteers who fit the criteria of the study and who were able to commit to the interview timeline. One criterion of the study was that participants be in the 3rd year of their education degree. The reason for this is that I wanted participants to have a certain distance from their first experiences at CSJ. If they had experienced unpleasant events at the beginning of their education at CSJ, they could be vulnerable to my probing questions. I felt that having been in the program for at least two years would reduce this vulnerability. No male students volunteered for the study, which is perhaps not surprising as there are only a small number of men studying to become elementary teachers. In future research it would be important to gain the perspective of male students living this experience at CSJ.

Participant Profile

Although I had at one time, taught two of my three participants, none were being taught by me at the time of this study.

1. **Tammy** (pseudonym) was in her early twenties and at the time of this study was finishing her 3rd year in a B. Ed. program (secondary route). After graduation she hoped to become a teacher in a French immersion high school where she would teach Science and Mathematics. Although she wanted to teach in Alberta (where

her two brothers and parents lived) she wanted to travel the world. She completed her elementary and secondary schooling in two French immersion centers in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. She was a very athletic and health conscious person with an abundance of energy and a great sense of adventure. She was single but hoped some day to have children and to raise them in French.

2. **Louise** (pseudonym) was a married mother of one little boy and was in her late twenties. She completed both her elementary and secondary schooling at a duo-track (English-French-immersion) school in a small town near Edmonton. She arrived at CSJ immediately after high school graduation at the age of 17 but left after two years. She came back seven years later to complete her degree. Between these two points in time, she lived in British-Columbia where she met and married her husband. She was raising her son in French as well as in Punjabi (her husband's family's first language). She had always been interested in language and hence was also studying Spanish in her spare time. In December 2005, she graduated with a BEd and hoped to teach in a French immersion elementary setting.

3. **Joanne** (pseudonym) was in her mid-twenties and did all of her (K-12) schooling in a French immersion context in Saskatchewan. She also completed an initial post-secondary degree at the University of Regina, where she graduated with a B.A. in French (Department of Romance Languages). She was now pursuing an After Degree in Education (elementary route) at CSJ and hoped to teach in a French immersion school either in Alberta or in Saskatchewan after she graduated. She sang in a French choir and had sung the National Anthem at

various events. She was also a proficient skater, which she taught to children professionally. She was single but stated that she planned to speak French to her prospective children.

Data Collection

According to Ellis (1998), "to track the progress or development of an interpretive inquiry project one can find it helpful to visualize the process as a series of loops in a spiral…[whereby] each loop may represent a separate activity that resembles data collection and interpretation" (p. 20). In this study, the four loops consisted of three interviews with each of the three participants; field notes kept by the researcher; a journal kept by participants in which they recorded additional post-interview comments; and pre-interview activities brought to the interviews to center discussions.

Keeping to the Question

In qualitative research, it must be remembered that the researcher is the "primary instrument in data collection and analysis…The investigator's role…can be compared to that of a detective…It takes time and patience to search for clues, to follow up leads, to find the missing pieces, to put the puzzle together" (Merriam, 1998, pp. 20-21). As a qualitative researcher I recognized that I needed to have "an enormous tolerance for ambiguity…[as] there are no set procedures or protocols that can be followed step by step [in this type of research] and that I would need to recognize that the best way to proceed would not always be obvious" (p. 20). It is in this sense that Ball calls qualitative research "a plunge into the unknown" (Boostrom, 1994, p. 51). One important strategy in dealing with the ambiguous nature of this type of research was to have a clear question in mind

while in the field. I continuously asked myself, "What's the problem? What am I looking at here?" As Boostrom (1994) states, "With a clearly stated question in mind, a researcher can confidently go into the field, presumably knowing exactly what to look for" (p. 51). Therefore, constantly coming back to my question, not unlike using a compass, helped me avoid the disorienting nature of qualitative research in the field. I also needed to remain aware that in this type of research, "the observer is changed by the act of observing" (Boostrom, 1994, p. 51). As already mentioned, how much I was changed by this study still surprises me. Thankfully I like myself better now than I did before I began this research as I am more receiving and understanding of second language students at CSJ.

In conclusion, Boostrom highlights the necessity of yielding "to the moral dimension in order to see…where the boundaries disappear between investigator and investigated" (1994, p. 64). This resonates nicely with a Buberian perspective as, "when two individuals 'happen' to each other, there is an essential remainder which is common to them but which reaches out beyond the special sphere of each. That remainder is the basic reality, the 'sphere of the between'" (p. 4). Accordingly, he sees that "human science must begin with the uniqueness of the person, with the concrete relation between experimenter and subject" (Friedman, 1992, p. 13). I tried whenever possible to enter into this sphere of the between with my participants in order to make them present and to confirm them in their uniqueness.

Individual Interviews

I began interviewing my participants individually at the end of June 2005. All interviews were audio-taped and transcribed, and were conducted in French. I decided to

conduct the interviews in French because I felt the participants had become used to communicating and were comfortable with me in this language at the CSJ. In addition, I didn't want them to think that I perceived their level of French as inadequate for the interviews. I also felt it was important to capture the rhythms and style of speaking of these second language students. On the other hand, I did let them know that if at any time they wanted to speak in English that it was completely acceptable for them to do so. At times the participants did slip in words or sentences in English when they felt the need; this happened spontaneously and freely. The interview data took the form of narrative that I interpreted by relating my participants' storied experiences to my own, through a forward and backward movement around the hermeneutic circle. As Smith (1999) says, "we find ourselves, hermeneutically speaking, always in the middle of stories, and good hermeneutical research shows an ability to read those stories from inside out and outside in" (p. 42). Mishler (1986) notes that "if we wish to hear respondents' stories then we must invite them into our work as collaborators, sharing control with them, so that together we try to understand what their stories are about" (p. 249). Addison (1989) believes that, "in interpretive research, a researcher's interpretation is a part of a co-constructive process in building meaning with participants" (p. 42).

The Interview Process – A Conversational Mode

The interview within a hermeneutic process consists of bringing forth narratives and co-constructing meaning in a conversational mode with participants. This is done, metaphorically speaking, by moving around the hermeneutic spiral – going from larger pre-understandings to a deeper and truer picture of the interviewee. Here interviews are not a type of grilling where we assume we know the answers to our questions before even

asking them (sticking to our own frameworks) but rather interviews take on the quality of genuine conversations where we are open to the other thereby allowing our untested assumptions to be challenged and transformed. Within this type of qualitative interpretive inquiry, "conversation is poetic in style [where] hermeneutical reflection requires that a critical distance be taken in order that what the language reveals, be placed into the open. This can be accomplished by imposing a more formal dialectic of question and answer" (p. 81). This dialectic can be understood as grounded in what Buber called the *oral-aural dimension* "that category of human reality…constituted in speaking-and-listening or address-and-response" (Stewart, 1996, p. 158).

Interpreting the Data – The Hermeneutic Spiral

Data analysis within qualitative studies occurs simultaneously with data collection (Merriam, 2002). Therefore there is no clear-cut division between collecting and analyzing the data. Ellis (1998) applies the notion of working through the loops of a spiral when conducting and interpreting interviews:

> when a study is viewed through a series of loops in a spiral, each loop represents a different attempt to get closer to what one hopes to understand. One enters each loop, or separate inquiry, with a question. What one learns in the loop provides direction or a reframing of the question for the next loop. What one learns may in fact change the direction of the study quite dramatically. (p. 20)

It is one thing to read about this process but it is another to live it. Quite a few times, I needed to go back to reading about interpretive inquiries in order to reassure

myself that it was 'normal' that things seemed to be shifting and changing as I proceeded with the study. Over time I came to understand that not only was this shifting normal, but that it was required in this type of research. This refocusing reflects what Ellis (1998) calls 'multi-loop' inquiries where "what the researcher learns in each activity provides a focus or reframed question for the next inquiry" (p. 26). She goes on to describe this process in the following way,

> Each loop or exploration, which can be understood as data collection and interpretation, generates findings. Some of these findings may well be what the researcher expected. Others, however, may be surprises…In hermeneutic terms, these unexpected dimensions are called *uncoverings*. While uncoverings may not lead directly to a solution, they often enable a researcher to understand the problem or question differently and so to reframe it usefully for planning the next step in the inquiry. (Ellis, 1998, p. 22)

Here each act of uncovering is "the return arc of the hermeneutic circle [as a] response to our inquiry" (Ellis, 1998, p. 23). Therefore not only did the loops allow me to move through the data collection process by focusing and refocusing my interviews but they also directed me through the interpretation process with the help of the hermeneutic spiral. In the next section I make this interpretive process *explicit*, as I lead the reader through the different loops of the hermeneutic spiral that I traveled, as I attempted to 'fit' my research questions, purpose and problem into the 'right' frame.

The First Loop: Shifting Frames

As I noted in Chapter Two, this study began when I wrote and presented a candidacy proposal that was accepted by my doctoral committee. In that paper I outlined what I intended to do in order to complete this research. As I went out into the field and began collecting data by conducting interviews and keeping field notes, the form of the research began to change. Specifically, the theoretical lens I had chosen, Lave and Wenger's Community of Practice perspective (CoP) began to feel inappropriate for my study. As I tried to analyze the data that I was collecting, I found myself getting more and more frustrated. Things weren't coming together as I had hoped. Rather than accept what I was seeing, I spent a lot of time trying to make everything fit – a little like shoving square pegs into round holes. Finally, I was forced to admit that there was a real problem with using the Community of Practice lens. Metaphorically, I was forced to move back up the hermeneutic spiral, to a previous point in the research process, where I was forced to resume reading and searching the literature in order to find a more suitable lens. This is an example of the lived experience of working with the hermeneutic spiral where the researcher moves, in a constant back and forth motion, *into*, *out of* and *back into* the different layers of the study in order to test for coherence and alignment of all the different parts. Below, I explain how I came to see the misalignment between the CoP perspective and my research concerns.

Because I was studying second language use, I was naturally drawn to the recent shift in second language theorizing from a linguistic and cognitive one to a more socially and culturally oriented one (Toohey, 2000). As previously noted, this move is perhaps

best represented by socio-cultural theorists' Lave and Wenger's (1991) 'communities of practice' model where:

> Learning as a situated activity has as its central defining characteristic a process that [the authors] call *legitimate peripheral participation* ... Legitimate peripheral participation provides a way to speak about the relations between newcomers and old-timers, and about activities, identities, artefacts, and communities of knowledge and practice. It concerns the process by which newcomers become part of a community of practice. (p. 29)

In the first stages of my research, the CoP appeared to fit perfectly with my intention of studying the experiences of French immersion students as they tried to gain access to the new community at Campus Saint-Jean. As I began to broaden my understanding of this perspective, I read Gee's (2000) work where he uses a similar notion of communities of practice in the context of new ways of learning in the New Capitalist world. As well, I read Brown (1990) and Brown and Campione (1990; 1994) who substitute the term 'communities of learners' for 'communities of practice' but which can be understood in much the same way. The more I studied the literature surrounding socio-cultural understandings of second language learning and the CoP model, the more problems I saw with using it. For instance, in this model, 'newcomers' and 'oldtimers' are understood as categories, glossing over the uniqueness of each individual within. As well, it does not take into consideration the previous community in which these newcomers dwelled and how the new community may be constructed quite differently from this previous one.

Like Eraut (2002), I also felt that, "learning in communities of practice is understood as reproductive in nature, through induction of newcomers by 'old timers' who acquire competence and status in this new community" (p. 3). Not only did I agree with it being reproductive but as Martin (2005) reinforces, I too came to believe that this approach focuses on commonalities rather than on diversity and agency, and offers no explanation for how communities transform themselves" (p. 143). In order to compensate for these problems, Martin (2005) combines Lave and Wenger' community of practice model and socio-cultural activity theory, in a similar way as did Dunn (2002) in his doctoral dissertation, *Effects of Power and Identity on Access to Participation in Second Language Communities*. Here activity theory:

> derives from Vygotsky's ideas of learning through mediation. It interprets learning as both a social and individual process where two or more individuals work together on a common focus of learning to achieve a shared goal. This theory of social learning, like communities of practice, draws on ideas of mutual engagement and joint enterprise for learning. Sociocultural theory places mediation at the centre of the learning relationship, and one of the most important tools of mediating learning is language. (Martin, 2005, p. 143)

While this combination may have helped these theorists resolve some of the difficulties with Lave and Wenger's Community of Practice, I still felt something wasn't right. As I read and reread this literature, I began to take notice of some of the instrumental language that runs through much of it. For instance, Lave and Wenger's (1991) description of distributed cognition as the **mechanics** of group **performance** or

learning as **object** as described by Martin (2005) made me less and less comfortable with the emphasis these theorists placed on 'workplace learning' and the goal of developing certain **competencies** and **skills**. It appeared to me that within much of this theorizing, there still lingered notions that were reminiscent of a mechanistic worldview of learning, as well as a tendency to objectify those participating in this learning as the category 'social group' which glosses over the uniqueness of individual that make up the group. It was at this point that I decided that the CoP framework was still too closely tied to a cognition model for my purposes and not closely enough to the type of experiential model that I felt was needed to frame this study. This of course does not mean that another researcher or even I, at another time, could not use the CoP framework fruitfully.

Somewhat synchronistically, I then came across a short paragraph in an article I was reading for a doctoral course. It was a brief quotation taken from a book written by Buberian psychologist, Maurice Friedman, where he mentioned the notion of a 'community of otherness.' I was immediately curious, since I hadn't run across this notion of community while conducting my various searches. As I backtracked through bibliographies and found Friedman and then Buber's writings, I knew that I had found a framework that was much more suited to my study. Admittedly, it was only when I was able to contrast and compare these two very different notions of community that I was able to reach this final conclusion.

I came to see that although today in second language research, many believe that we have come through the so called, 'social turn,' I believe that this move has actually been quite modest. When I truly delved wholeheartedly into the socio-cultural literature and in particular the community of practice model, I came to see that while these theorists were

using words like 'community,' 'participation' and 'identity,' they were in fact still grounded in a competence and learning model where a lack of competence in the language or in a specific practice made **participation in** and **access to** the specific community, difficult if not impossible. While I admit that competence, or a lack thereof, is certainly an issue in the present study, I was not prepared to make it *only* about competence and learning. I felt that by placing these notions in the forefront, the study risked becoming about access, participation and competence as abstract concepts, rather than about the lived experiences of those who felt themselves as lacking this access, competence and/or ability to participate in a certain community.

I had also struggled a great deal with how to conceptualize notions of identity within the CoP model and often found myself feeling more and more overwhelmed with the multitude of ways one might go about doing this. From traditional notions of identity as 'fixed' and 'unchanging,' all the way to poststructuralist understandings of it as 'constantly constructed' and 'deconstructed' by one's social contexts and histories, I was having a hard time finding the unique human being I was looking to understand in my study. By adopting Buber's philosophy of the 'Interhuman' not only was I able to disentangle myself from the problem of identity by conceptualizing it as the I-Thou principle, but I was also able to refocus my study by grounding it in Buber's notion of *spokenness*, which brought *speaking* to the forefront rather than learning.

In the end I decided that my study was as much about the two communities (French immersion and CSJ) and the ways in which they were constructed as it was about the students studying there. To me there seemed to be more going on at an institutional level than first met the eye. The community of practice model, while epistemologically sound,

lacked the ontological depth that I sought. It is for this reason that I chose to broaden this study by leaving the community of practice model as proposed by Lave and Wenger and adopting Friedman's Buberian notion of a 'community of affinity' and of 'otherness'. The fact that I felt the need to 'refocus' my research frame is not unusual in interpretive inquiries, as it is through this constant movement that the researcher brings all parts of the study into synchronicity with each other.

The Second Loop: Shifting Questions

Reframing one part of the study often results in a domino effect where other parts require a certain amount of refocusing also. Although this refocusing was mostly due to the change in perspective guiding the study, this was not the only reason that my research question also needed to change. I came to realize that one of the things that had been causing me difficulties along the way was that my original question lacked focus. The question being:

How do graduates from (K-12) French immersion programs in Alberta experience shifts in identity as French speakers/learners once they enter a Francophone post-secondary 'community of practice? This had led me to wonder, "What do I mean by identity exactly?" "What do I mean by 'shifts'?" "What do I mean by 'speakers and learners'?" "Are they speakers? Are they learners? Or are they both?" "Am I interested in them as learners or speakers or both?" Finally I asked myself, "What's <u>really</u> the problem here?" I repeated this over and over until I came to realize that a major difficulty with this original question was the notion of 'shifting identities.' Thinking that conceptualizing 'identity' would be straightforward within the Community of Practice perspective, I came away feeling that most often these researchers were speaking of identity as a *thing* and not of

the individual people I was interested in understanding. Using Buber's theory of spokenness allowed me to reformulate my general overarching question to:

What are the experiences of French immersion graduates as they move from the French immersion community to the Francophone postsecondary community at the Campus Saint-Jean?

With much more specific sub-questions such as:

Why do graduates from French immersion programs choose to speak in English rather than in French when they find themselves in a Francophone postsecondary institution like the one at the Campus Saint-Jean, where the expectation is that they will speak and live in French?

Once I was able to narrow it down by using more specific wording, the whole process became much easier. Once my question and sub-questions were revised, I was able to give my interview questions more focus which allowed me to get at the 'core' of what I wanted to know from my participants. And once all these changes had been made, the process went much faster and the difficulties I had previously encountered, vanished.

The Third Loop: Shifting Purposes

Shifting the research questions simultaneously shifted the purpose of the study. The original purpose was:

> to understand how French immersion graduates struggle to define themselves as French speakers/learners within the culture of the Francophone institution at the Faculté Saint-Jean. In this sense, I search to

> understand how these students come to see themselves differently from the way they did when they were in a strictly French immersion context. (Candidacy document, April 2005)

The underlying notion of identity was again problematic when it came to the stated purpose of the study. Finding myself bogged down with all the different ways that the notion of 'identity' could be conceptualized, I went from the literature in socio-cultural theories to post-structuralist/critical feminist theories of identity all of which seemed too ephemeral and deconstructed for my purposes. Luckily, when I adopted the new lens, it gave me a way of understanding both the notions of community and of identity simultaneously and in a way that satisfied my need to make sense of the 'human as human' and not as 'thing' – that is, as *Thou* and not as *It*. The new purpose was now to investigate how both communities were constructed in such a way that Anglophone students felt compelled to use English rather than French at the CSJ.

The Fourth Loop: Joining Lens and Method

The methodology, thankfully, remained mostly unchanged. When I decided to use a different theoretical framework I was thrilled to find that it *added* and *enhanced* the Gadamerian perspective I was already using. This type of 'good fit' between framework and method made me feel that I was finally on the right track.

Fifth Loop: Shifting Titles

Once all else had shifted, a more appropriate title needed to be found for the study. The former title, which was *Shifting Identities: French immersion graduates in a post-secondary Francophone 'Community of Practice'*, was changed to: *Holding the Tension*

in the Sphere of the Between: French immersion graduates in a Francophone post-secondary institution.

It was only after all parts of the research study were aligned that I was then able to make sense of the data I had collected. As Ellis (1998) suggests, I worked again with all transcripts, field notes, and journal entries, experiencing them as a whole or single text, where the task became to articulate the most coherent and comprehensive account of what I could learn from the sum of the inquiries. Each transcript and field note became part of a whole and the meaning of each could then be reconsidered in relation to the whole (p. 26). And it was at this point that the study required true textual labor as I began to look for patterns and themes in the data. As van Manen explains, "in order to come to grips with the structure of meaning of the text it is helpful to think of the phenomenon described in the text as approachable in terms of meaning units, structures of meaning, or themes" (1997, p. 78).

Conducting Thematic Analysis

"Thematic analysis refers to the process of recovering the theme or themes that are embodied and dramatized in the evolving meanings and imagery of the work" (van Manen, 1997, p. 78). Accordingly, van Manen says, "making something of a text or of a lived experience by interpreting its meaning is more accurately a process of insightful invention, discovery or disclosure – grasping and formulating a thematic understanding is not a rule-bound process but a free act of 'seeing' meaning (1997, p. 79). Here the articulation of themes is not a simple skill or cognitive process that can be learned. Rather van Manen sees themes "as emerging lived meanings in life" (p. 88) and explains them in the following way:

1) *Theme is the means to get at the notion.*

2) *Theme gives shape to the shapeless.*

3) *Theme describes the content of the notion.*

4) *Theme is always a reduction of a notion.*

I chose to use van Manen's (1997) *selective reading approach* where "we listen to or read a text several times and ask, "*What statement(s) or phrase(s) seem particularly essential or revealing about the phenomenon or experience being described?*" These statements we then circle, underline, or highlight" (p. 93). I preferred this holistic approach simply because it best reflects how I tend to think. I needed to look at the whole as a whole and then attempt to see the particular, as patterns running through the whole. This allowed me not only to see what participants held in common, but what experiences they had that were quite different.

Writing Qualitative Research

Much of the work of uncovering themes took place as I wrote and rewrote this research text. It must be noted here that the act of writing in a qualitative study such as this one, is quite unlike the same stage in most post-positive projects. In the human sciences, "writing does not merely enter the research process as a final step or stage…human science research *is* a form of writing" (van Manen, 1997, p. 111). Van Manen distinguishes between the purpose of writing qualitatively and that of writing quantitatively when he states:

there comes a moment when the researcher needs to communicate in writing what he or she has been up to. One speaks here of the 'research report' which suggests that a clear separation exists between the activity of research and the reporting activity in which the research is made public. Also in the work of various contemporary human science researchers, writing is conceived largely as a reporting process. With them the aim is to make human science methodologically 'rigorous,' 'systems based' and 'hard'. In such a framework there is no place for thinking about research itself as a poetic textual (writing) practice. (1997, p. 125)

Along the same lines, Ellis (1998) states that:

Writing has a significant role in this process of interpreting the data our explorations produce. In writing we compose ourselves, putting our understanding together again in new ways. Writing invites reflection and deliberation about the relationships among experiences or ideas as we evaluate the argument or interpretation we put forward in writing. Often the insights and connections emerge from the very process of the writing itself. Thus, one can and should begin the writing without knowing everything one will say or write about. (p. 6)

As I applied Lugones' four criteria of at-easeness to both the French immersion community and the Francophone community at Campus Saint-Jean, I began to imagine what was emerging from the data as a series of theoretical models, representing the difficulties that French immersion students encounter when they attempt to move from one community of affinity into another. Through the act of writing and rewriting I was

able to construct these models which I feel give a concrete dimension to the patterns and themes that I was seeing in the data.

ISSUES OF TRUSTWORTHINESS

Criteria for Evaluating an Interpretive Account

This is perhaps the section that I have taken the most care with since the receiving of this work will depend on readers understanding how to evaluate this type of qualitative text.

How to read and assess the present study

In a qualitative study such as this one, it is important to understand how, as the researcher and the primary instrument of data collection and interpretation, my role might be compared to that of a detective. As indicated above, the process that I was called to live, took time and patience to search for clues, to follow up leads, to find the missing pieces and to put the puzzle together" (Merriam, 1998, p. 20-21). I did not always find the level of ambiguity and uncertainty in this process an easy one to live. I was fortunate that in the research methods courses I took, the professors made it clear that anyone who wanted to use an interpretive approach had better be prepared to make this 'research process' explicit to those who would read the study. It was explained that one of the major difficulties encountered by those using qualitative methodologies is being able to speak to the trustworthiness of their work. Accordingly, researchers must be able to show, and in some cases, teach those who read our work how to judge this type of study appropriately. Those who are more comfortable with positivist/post-positivist approaches sometimes want to apply the same criteria to post-modern qualitative studies that they

would use to judge their own research. As Denzin and Lincoln (1994) note "the challenges to qualitative research are many. Qualitative researchers are called journalists or soft scientists. Their work is termed unscientific, or only exploratory, or entirely personal and full of bias" (p. 4). I have encountered this difficulty more than once in speaking with colleagues about my own research. I have been asked how my findings can be 'generalizable' with only 3 participants. How a conversational mode could be valid. I find these types of questions very difficult, not because I don't understand what qualitative research entails but because the persons asking the questions seem not to. I have come to understand, as Friedman (1974) explains:

> In contrast to the scientist who is only interested in particulars insofar as they yield generalizations, we can derive valid insights from the unique situations in which we find ourselves without having to claim that they apply to all situations. We take these insights with us into other situations and test the limits of their validity. Sometimes we find that these insights do hold for a particular situation and sometimes that they do not or that they have to be modified. Yet that does not mean that they cannot be valid insights for other situations. (p. 24)

Whenever two researchers try to bridge the abyss between paradigms, it becomes a task of educating the other on the differences between positivist-post-positivist and postmodern approaches. Taylor (1985) explains the process in the following way:

> Our conviction that the account makes sense is contingent on our reading of action and situation. But these readings cannot be explained or justified except by reference to other such readings, and their relation to the whole.

> If an interlocutor does not understand this kind of reading, or will not accept it as valid, there is nowhere else the argument can go. Ultimately, a good explanation is one which makes sense of the behaviour, but then to appreciate a good explanation, one has to agree on what makes good sense; what makes good sense is a function of one's readings; and these in turn are based on the kind of sense one understands. (p. 24)

Therefore, it is imperative that those evaluating this study understand that in interpretive approaches such as the one used here, the types of changes and transformations that I have just presented are not only positive happenings but are one indicator of the success of the study. By making the hermeneutic process transparent, I feel that I have built a case for the trustworthiness upon which this study can properly be judged.

As readers make their way through this text, there may be moments when they suddenly say to themselves, "I think I read this already", or "I think she's repeating herself." It is at these moments that they will know that they are living the hermeneutic process as I did. I must reiterate that in order to properly judge a qualitative naturalistic inquiry such as this one, it is imperative that those evaluating it not position it within a traditional scientific positivist/post-positivist framework, and all that this entails, but rather situate it in the appropriate constructivist postmodern one. Like Denzin and Lincoln (1994), as a qualitative researcher, I too, "reject positivist and post-positivist criteria when evaluating my work as I see these criteria as irrelevant to it, and contend that these criteria reproduce only a certain kind of science, a science that silences too many voices" (p. 5).

I ask that when judging the quality of this work, that criterion of *trustworthiness* and *authenticity* be applied in contrast to the benchmark of *rigor* employed by positivists and post-positivists. That *credibility* rather than *internal validity* be used. That the notion of *transferability* be considered rather than one of *external validity or generalizability*. That *dependability* rather than *reliability* and *confirmability* rather than *objectivity* be applied to the work under consideration. In addition to these, I will also accept the following criteria: "verisimilitude; emotionality; personal responsibility; political praxis; multivoiced texts; dialogue with subjects and an ethic of care" (Denzin & Lincoln 1994, p. 5).

Packer and Addison (1989) suggest the following four general approaches to evaluating a study such as the present one: (1) requiring that it be coherent; (2) examining its relationship to external evidence; (3) seeking consensus among various groups; (4) assessing its relationship to future events (p.30). It must also be emphasized that in an interpretive inquiry one does not seek <u>one</u> correct or final interpretation but rather "the most adequate one that can be developed at that time" (Ellis, 1998, p. 27). Hence when evaluating an interpretive account, Packer and Addison (1989) suggest the following possible outcomes:

1. *Ideas for helpful action are identified.*
2. *New questions or concerns come to the researcher's attention.*
3. *The researcher is changed by the research – that is, the researcher discovers inadequacies in his or her initial pre-understandings* (p. 29).

Finally, I refer to Stewart (1996) who in an effort to extend Gadamer's interpretive conceptualization of validity advocates using Buber's notion of *resonance* [note congruence between lens and method] who:

> distinguished between scholarship which treats its topic as an object of knowledge to be advanced exactly and comprehensively and that which seeks primarily to re-present to the reader the force and vitality of the past tradition in such a way that its former spirit will reinfuse itself into the present. (Stewart 1996, p. 166)

Here, Stewart (1996) compares *resonance* to the tuning of forks or strings on an instrument, "when one fork or string is made to vibrate at a certain pitch, the nearby one will also vibrate, even though the two are not touching" (p. 167). He explains the process in the following way:

> As one reads or listens to the claim one wants to test, one should initially and tentatively be open to its coherence and legitimacy. Initially enter, in other words, the world constituted by the theory or claim. Then search your own experience ("Recollect it") and juxtapose the claim the text makes against your search of your own experience, notice the degree to which the claim and the experience 'resonate' or 'vibrate' in distinct but interconnected rhythms. (p. 168)

Buber's notion of *resonance* is also similar to what Buytendijk once referred to as:

> the 'phenomenological nod' (again note the congruence between *phenomenological ways of interpreting data* and the Buberian [theoretical

> lens] notion of *resonance*) as a way of indicating that a good phenomenological description is something that we can nod to, recognizing it as an experience that we have had or could have had. In other words, *a good phenomenological description is collected by lived experience and recollects lived experience – is validated by lived experience and it validates lived experience* (italics in original). This is sometimes termed the validating circle of inquiry. In order to become adept at his validating process one has to learn to insert oneself in the tradition of scholarship in such a way that one can become a participating member of the tradition (van Manen 1997, p. 27). [Note congruence between Buber's *I-Thou* and the need to insert *oneself* into the research process thereby eliminating the possibility of conducting the interview process from within an *I-It* stance].

Limitations and Delimitations

This study was limited to three graduates from (K-12) French Immersion programs who were in their third year of a BEd or BEd (after degree) program at the Campus Saint-Jean at the time of the study. The research was perhaps limited by my participants' ability to express and make themselves understood in French, but since they felt at ease to use English when needed, I feel this limitation if at all, was very slight. Conducting the interviews in French was important in order to illustrate the language rhythms and choices made by these second language students and although the risk of misunderstanding or misinterpretation was always a possibility, I believe this risk was minimal. Also the participants were used to speaking to me (as one of their instructors) in

French and I felt they would be more uncomfortable if they now had to speak to me in English. For this reason the participants were given the transcripts to read as well as drafts of the final text. This study was also limited to the experiences of these three particular participants at the Campus Saint-Jean and therefore cannot be said to be generalizable to all French immersion graduates studying at CSJ.

Those individuals working at CSJ, as well as the students studying there, although not directly involved in this study, have influenced some of my understandings. Many have pushed me to reconsider and rethink some of my assumptions by sharing with me their insights into the lived experience of students at the Campus Saint-Jean, whether they are from a French immersion background or not. As it was not my intention to 'isolate' myself from the context in which my participants lived, my own lived experiences as instructor and colleague on this landscape have contributed to shaping and reshaping my understandings.

Ethical Considerations

The University Standards for Protection of Human Research Participants were applied throughout this study. I received permission from the Dean of the Campus Saint-Jean to pursue my research in this setting. I obtained ethics approval from the Ethics Review Committee of the Faculty of Education and from the Campus Saint-Jean before I entered the field. All participants were asked to provide informed consent in writing before the study began. I explained to participants that participation in this study was voluntary and that they were free to withdraw at any time from the study, without suffering any penalty. Pseudonyms have been used in order to protect the identity of all participants. Participants were given the chance to review all transcribed interviews and

notes in order to change or remove any data with which they did not feel comfortable prior to the dissertation being finalized. I remained in close contact with my supervisor and talked to her about any difficulties or problematic situations that I encountered while in the field.

I remained aware that 'ethics' could not just be about rules applied to a research situation. Rather it was my 'way of being' with my participants that was the ultimate ethical test. While external mechanisms are important in qualitative research I understood the importance of creating a relationship of trust as I conducted the research. In the spirit of which Weber (1986) speaks, interviews became a place of joint reflection on the phenomenon under investigation and a deepening of experience for both interviewer and participants. It was a conversational relationship between two people, in the sense provided by Buber and Friedman, of entering the 'sphere of the between' through authentic dialogue or what Buber also calls the 'oral-aural relationship' – one in which we come to learn as much about each other as we learned about the topic of conversation" (Weber 1986, p. 66). It is in this sense that I continuously strived to be "genuinely present, committed and open to [my participants]" (Weber, 1986, p. 65).

Finally, I wanted to better understand the lived experiences of second language learners as well as to help post-secondary institutions like the Campus Saint-Jean meet the particular needs of these students.

CHAPTER FIVE - FINDINGS

"Constructing the French Immersion Context as a Community of Affinity"

Introduction

The main purpose of this study was to understand the experiences of three French immersion graduates at a Francophone post-secondary institution. A second goal was to discover why these students often chose to speak in English and not in French while at CSJ. In the next three sections I present three levels of findings that came to light as I made my way interpretively around the hermeneutic spiral. Each loop around the spiral brought me to a deeper level of understanding of the data before me.

In Chapter Five, at the first level of interpretation, I draw the portrait of the French immersion context using Lugones' four criteria of 'at-easness' (common language, common norms, common relationships and common histories) to make the argument that it can be understood as a community of *affinity*, as per Friedman's definitions presented in chapter three. I use the same process with the Campus Saint-Jean in order to show that it also is its own community of *affinity* albeit a very different one from the French immersion context. In the last part of this section I discuss the challenges that arise when students attempt to move from one community of *affinity* (with its particular language, norms, relationships and histories) to another community of *affinity* where the language, norms, people and histories can be quite different from the ones that were known on the previous landscape.

In Chapter Six, at the second level of interpretation, I discuss how unprepared some students from French immersion programs feel as they enter their first year at the CSJ. In

addition, I discuss how the different underlying assumptions of the two communities have likely contributed to many of these difficulties.

In Chapter Seven, at the third level of interpretation, I speak to my own beginning assumptions (as a Francophone who has been at CSJ for many years) and explain how these were transformed by opening up a research space where I could dialogue and come to 'hear' the lived experiences of the students I interviewed. Using Gadamer's notion of forestructure, I test these assumptions against the stated realities of my participants by moving in a back and forth motion (into my assumptions and out into the reality of my participants and back again) around the hermeneutic spiral. Throughout this process, I report that many of my original assumptions turned out to be inappropriate and skewed.

Standing in the 'Between'

In conducting this study I was aware of how much time I spent on what Buber (1967) called the 'narrow ridge'. As Friedman (1991) points out, the "narrow ridge is no "happy middle which ignores the reality of paradox and contradiction in order to escape from the suffering they produce" (p. xi). While I could have interviewed Francophones at CSJ to see how they perceived the large number of Anglophones in the institution, I chose not to do so because I felt this might well further promote a situation of 'Us vs. Them'. In order to avoid this, I chose to do a document analysis of France Levasseur Ouimet's book, *Regards, paroles et gestes: en souvenir du 20e anniversaire de la Faculté Saint-Jean.* Although, Levasseur-Ouimet's historical rendering of the FSJ is but one possible view of this history, it did allow me to identify certain storylines that have been lived by many Francophones in Canada. Although French Canadians and Francophone institutions may not have or do not presently live these same storylines, it remains that

this document was able to highlight storylines that were pertinent to those living at FSJ over many years. While I believe that storylines like those of 'protectionism' and 'survival' are changing, they can still be felt at the institution today. In a world that is becoming more and more 'borderless', one way that Anglophones arriving from second language programs and Francophones arriving from all over the world can live together and see the Campus Saint-Jean prosper, is if all join each other in the tension in the *sphere between* and discover who the "other" group truly is, not as a category, but as unique individuals who may not in the end, be all that different from each other.

The First Loop Around the Hermeneutic Spiral – 1st Level of Interpretation

In this first section I accessed the hermeneutic spiral in an attempt to answer the question, "*How is a French immersion context constructed as a community of affinity?* As I made my way around the first loop of the spiral, I applied each of Lugones' (2003) four criteria of at-easeness to the interview data I had collected. I did this while keeping in mind the material I presented in the literature and historical section of Chapter Two in order to present how the French immersion community can be understood as one based in affinity and like-mindedness rather than one based in otherness. Further on, I will apply the same process to the Campus Saint-Jean.

Lugones' 1st Criteria of At-Easeness:

- Being a *fluent speaker* – that is, I know all the *words* that make up a particular [community] and therefore feel confident speaking.

Applying this first criterion to the French immersion context, I asked my participants, "What kind of speakers are the students in French immersion programs?"

"Do they feel confident in speaking in this community?" "If so, are they as comfortable using French, as they are using English?" "Do they have a distinct way of speaking that makes them recognizable as French immersion students?" With these questions guiding my interviews, the following themes emerged from the data.

Speaking Immersionese

In Chapter Two, I explained how research has shown that French immersion students often speak a type of 'Franglais' or as Lyster (1987) says, "they speak immersion." Many studies have shown that whether it is called Immersionese, Franglais or speaking immersion (Spilka, 1976; Bibeau, 1984; Stern, 1984; Webster; 1986; Lyster, 1987), this way of speaking French is a recognizable way of speaking that emerges from the many years a student spends in a French immersion program. This language is constructed in part by what is called the 'fossilization of error', which is characterized by 'grammar errors' (Bournot-Trites,1995) such as problems in using verb tenses like *le conditionnel* (Blais, 2000), *l'imparfait, le passé composé* (Kowal-Ukrainka, 1997) and the misuse of the verbs *avoir* and *être* (Hanlon, 1999; Knaus, 2000). It is also characterized by the use of anglicisms and switching to English when speakers cannot find the proper verb, noun or adverb to use in a sentence (Chan, 1996). In other words, many of those who have gone through immersion programs emerge with a particular way of speaking. This 'immersionese' is often perceived quite negatively by native speakers who have frequently striven to perfect the French language. Although many researchers today suggest that acquiring a second language takes a great deal of time and effort and that this way of speaking must be accepted until students become more proficient, I disagree that time alone will solve the problem of language fossilization. It is not the

intention of this study to address the reasons for this fossilization or for this particular way of speaking French, but only to look at the *consequences* of this particular way of speaking for French immersion graduates once they come into contact with mother tongue speakers. It is interesting to note that while this way of speaking does have consequences once the students arrive at CSJ, in the French immersion context often students are not conscious of speaking any differently than other French speakers. In fact, one of my participants, Tammy, seemed quite unaware of the fact that she speaks in this way. During our first interview she said:

> *Un de mes bons amis vient du Québec..um.. lui apprend l'anglais alors lui il est plus confortable de parler en français alors avec lui c'est comme pour moi c'est comme Franglais...mais y'a encore du français qui rentre la dedans.*
>
> *One of my friends comes from Quebec...um...he's learning English so he's more comfortable in speaking French so with him it's like me ...it's like Franglais...but there's still some French that comes into it.*

Because those students in the French immersion program rarely come into contact with other French speaking communities, as Fraser Child (1998), Rehner (1998) and Lalonde (2002) have noted, this way of speaking is not necessarily experienced by them as 'negative,' as it is the language in which they are used to communicating. Louise, a second participant, explained how it was only in grade twelve that a teacher explained to her the problem of 'error fossilization' in French immersion,

Et ils ont expliqué en je pense ..um mon enseignant en douzième année a expliqué les erreurs fossilisées (tappe des mains) oh oh yeah ..c'est quoi une erreur fossilisée? C'était très difficile de changer et j'avais..et j'ai encore des problèmes avec ces erreurs..j'ai fini...je suis finie...j'ai FINALEMENT appris la différence entre j'ai fini et je suis finie mais encore ..quelques fois je fais l'erreur ...dans la tête avant que je parle je peux changer mais...mais c'est parce que j'ai vraiment pris la décision OKAY je ne vais jamais dire, « Je suis finie » encore...

And they explained, I think...um it was my grade twelve teacher who explained fossilized errors (claps hands)..Oh, oh, yeah! What's a fossilized error? It was very difficult to change and I still have problems with these errors...I finish...I am finished...I FINALLY learned the difference between I finish and I have finished but still...sometimes I make the error...in my head before I speak I can change but...but it's because I really made the decision OKAY I will never say, "I am finished" (in French this is like saying ***I <u>am</u> dead*** *instead of* ***I <u>have</u> completed something***) *again.*

She went on to explain her lack of grammatical skills, especially her lack of knowledge with the subjunctive verb tense:

... j'avais des problèmes avec le subjonctif...comprendre la différence entre quand on utilise le subjonctif quand on utilise pas le subjonctif et ce n'était pas vraiment enseigné comme ça en immersion. On ..j'pense qu'on a eu des petits leçons en grammaire mais pas avant la douzième année

...I had problems with the subjunctive...understanding the difference between when we use the subjunctive and when we don't use the subjunctive and it wasn't really taught like that in immersion. We..I think we had some little lessons in grammar but not before grade twelve.

In the sense of Lugone's first criteria of ***knowing all the words*** that make up a particular community and therefore feeling confident in speaking – one could say that French immersion students are quite unaware of speaking 'immersion' because the language they speak *is* the language of their community. No one would dispute that English plays a big role on the French immersion landscape, and students are for the most part not aware of there being anything wrong with speaking more English than French. As Tammy said:

C'était vraiment petit [l'école] um..moi j'trouver que en école presque plus qu'on montait en niveau scolaire moins que français devenait utiliser..c'était pas une grand grand influence..c'était plus en Anglais puis rendu en onzième, douzième année les sciences étaient toutes en Anglais aussi ..ça fait que c'est difficile de tsé dans les corridors on entendait pas beaucoup de Français mais si c'était monsieur Gagné qui vient de Québec lui il parle Français uniquement là t'entendait du Français puis lui il criait puis tout le monde répondait en Anglais puis en classe même les profs ou les enseignants posaient des questions en Français et les réponses étaient en Anglais.

It was really small (the school), um...me, I find that almost the more we moved up in grades, the less French was used...it wasn't a very big

influence...it was mostly in English and as of grade eleven, Science courses were all in English too...so you know it's hard, in the halls we didn't hear much French but if it was Mr. Gagné who comes from Quebec he talked solely in French and there you heard some French and he yelled and everyone answered in English and in class even though some teachers asked us questions in French they were answered in English.

The fact that English seemed to be used more and more as the students moved up through the grades supports Tarone and Swain's (1995) findings. All participants expressed in one way or another the fact that once they reached junior high, English was spoken much more than French. In the elementary grades, while students said they spoke French (albeit perhaps Immersionese) in academic situations, they acknowledged that they spoke in English with their friends at recess time and in the hallways. Louise expressed the frustration she felt at being told to speak in French by the teacher when she felt unable to do so, especially in social situations:

Ils (les enseignants) disaient toujours parle en français...dans la classe et on faisait des projets de groupes on peut pas parler dans la classe..quand on fait des projets de groupes ...franchement des personnes qui font des projets de groupes ne parlent pas 100% du temps du projet parce qu'ils font des choses ..ils peuvent travailler et parler en même temps et on peut pas parler de qu'est-ce qu'on va faire cette fin de semaine en français parce qu'on a pas le vocabulaire..alors cette petite voix qui est toujours, PARLE EN FRANÇAIS...et ça devient un peu frustrant après un bout de temps parce que même si on commence ..le temps que ça me prend à ce

point là de dire je vais aller (tappe des mains) faire du magasinage cette fin de semaine je n'avais cette vocabulaire en douzième année alors ...je ne pouvais pas..en le temps que ça me pris de choisir les mots puis tout ça je pourrais comme le dire quinze fois en anglais.

They (French immersion teachers) were always telling us to speak in French...in the class and we would be doing group projects...we couldn't talk in the class...when we were doing group projects...frankly when people are doing group projects they don't speak 100% of the time about the project because they're doing things...they can work and talk at the same time and we can't talk about what we're going to be doing this weekend in French because we don't have the vocabulary..so that voice that is always saying SPEAK IN FRENCH...well it becomes kind of frustrating after a while because even if we start...the time that it takes at that point to say "I'm going to go...(claps hands)..shopping this weekend ..I didn't have this vocabulary in grade twelve so...I couldn't...in the time it would take me to choose the words and all that... I could have said it fifteen times in English.

Again this supports the findings of studies like those done by Cohen (1997), Cohen and Tarone (1997) and Tarone and Swain (1995) that have noted French immersion students' strong receptive skills in comparison to their weak production skills. In addition, Riva (1996) discussed French immersion students' resistance and frustration at being corrected and told to speak in French. Based on these studies, as well as on the data gathered in this study, I feel able to state that French does seem to be spoken mostly as an

academic language in the French immersion school, while English is many times the language used in social situations. In the case of my participants, they all agreed that in elementary grades, speaking English happened more with their peers than with their teachers, but once students move into secondary levels, English became the social language spoken with many of the teachers as well. Overall, when it came to their ability to speak French in academic situations, my participants felt valued on the immersion landscape. They simply took for granted that English is the language to be used in social situations while French is to be used as a school language. Before coming to the Campus Saint-Jean, they were quite unaware that not being able to speak French in social situations could be problematic. As Louise explained

> *L' élève de l'immersion pense vraiment qu'ils sont bons parce que les personnes de maternelle jusqu'à douzième ont dit ça.*
>
> *The French immersion student thinks that he's really good because people from Kindergarten to grade twelve have told him this].*

It is important to realize that because of the high attrition rate in French immersion programs, those students who remain in the program until grade 12 are often the very best of the best when it comes to their functioning in the French language, at least on this landscape. Since most students have not been in a variety of French speaking contexts, they may perceive themselves as extremely competent in the French language while those coming from native speaking ones might not agree. I don't believe administrators or teachers intend to deceive students when they give French immersion students the impression that they are proficient in French. These students have often met the goal of the French immersion program, which is to create 'functional bilinguals'(although not all

researchers agree on the definition of 'functional' nor do they all believe that students reach high enough levels of functionality in French immersion). The fact though that students feel confident in the French language and perceive themselves positively as French users in the immersion context has important consequences for them once they find themselves at the Campus Saint-Jean. Many students are shocked to find that they are nowhere near as comfortable in the French language as they thought. For the first time, those like Louise faced the consequences of not being able to use vernacular language in French in social situations:

> *Les étudiants Francophones ne voulaient pas me parler à propos des mathématiques ou des sciences. C'est dans une relation personnelle. Alors, oui, mon français n'était pas assez bon parce que je ne savais pas comment commander un café en français. Mais, dans la classe, c'est quelque chose différent. Je faisais partie de l'AUFSJ dans ma deuxième année. On avait toujours des plaintes des élèves que le niveau de français commence à diminuer à la Faculté. Ce n'est pas que c'était dans la classe que ça diminuait parce que les enseignants étaient assez exigeants. Alors, ça ne diminuait pas là. C'était dans les couloirs parce qu'il y avait des personnes d'immersion et aussi des personnes braves qui ont décidé de rentrer après FSL. Alors, bravo ! Courage ! Alors, pour eux, parler en français, même s'ils essayaient, c'était un français assez cassé. Ce n'était pas relaxe. On ne parlait pas des choses comme « J'ai trois sœurs... » C'est vraiment un français très clinique et très pratique. Il avait des formats.*

The Francophone students didn't want to talk to me about Math or Science. It's in a personal relationship. So yeah, my French wasn't good enough because I didn't know how to order a coffee in French. But in class it was something different. I was part of the AUFSJ (students' union) in my second year. We always had complaints from students that the level of French at la Faculté was decreasing. It wasn't in the classes that it was decreasing because the professors are quite demanding. So it didn't decrease there. It was in the hallways because of people from immersion and other brave people who decided to come in after FSL (French Second Language programs). So bravo! Takes courage! So for them speaking in French even if they tried, it was quite broken French. It wasn't relaxed. We couldn't speak about things like, "I have three sisters..." It's really a very clinical and a very practical French.

Joanne also spoke to me about the problems of not being able to use French in social situations, although her sociolinguistic skills were more developed than the other two participants

Oui, ce sont les élèves d'immersion qui parlent moins en français. Je pense que c'est vrai. Ils se sentent moins à l'aise avec la langue. Ils se sentent inconfortables. Ça m'arrive parfois. Je pense que je n'ai pas le vocabulaire pour dire ça. Mais je me suis dit au début de l'année que je vais me donner le défi de parler même si je ne sais vraiment pas ce que je veux dire parce que ou quoi que ce soit. Je m'améliorais en le faisant. Puis, ça arrive.

Yes it is the French immersion students that speak less in French. I think that is true. They feel less at ease in the language. They feel uncomfortable. That happens to me sometimes. I think that I don't have the vocabulary to say something. But I told myself at the beginning of the year that I will give myself the challenge to speak even when I don't really know what I want to say. Because no matter what. I will get better by doing it.

While some might wonder why it is important that the French immersion students speak French while at CSJ, it comes down to the fact that it is through social language that one becomes part of a group. The participants themselves indicated in this study that they were greatly disappointed that they were unable to communicate socially in their second language after so many years in a French immersion program. Secondly, many of these second language students seek to become French teachers themselves some day. If they are to help their own students to achieve a functional bilingualism, it is necessary that they be able to use the French language in all situations. Not possessing the social dimension of the French language themselves will likely make this quite difficult.

This is not to say that all students in French immersion programs graduate with the same level of proficiency. Joanne is an example of a student who is very proficient in French. Interestingly, at times Joanne would identify with the French immersion group and at other times she tended to distance herself from them. She admitted to not being part of the Francophone group, but she often seemed reluctant to place herself in the immersion group. She was likely the only one of the three participants I interviewed who

might be on her way to assuming a more balanced bilingualism, as one who is fairly at-ease in both French and English.

In the following section I present how the use of the English language in social situations is tied to the norms espoused in the French immersion community.

Lugones' 2nd Criteria of At-Easeness

- Being normatively happy. I am familiar with the norms of this [community] and the norms help me know how to behave appropriately.

The fact that the use of English in school becomes more prevalent as immersion students move up through the grades has to do, not only with knowing or not knowing the words, but is tied to the normative values that are accepted on this landscape. Tammy spoke to these shifting normative values in regards to the use of English in the immersion school,

> *Oui même dans la salle de classe. Puis y'avait comme en 7-8-9 y'avait comme des règles..non! on répond en français c'est ça la règle puis là rendu en 10-11et 12e c'était comme...tsé c'était plus la règle..mais c'était quand même une règle mais c'était oui...moins tenue... j'étais juste comme « Wein! Puis j'ai pas assez de temps de les faire répéter... t'as une question t'as une réponse merci ». Puis entre élèves c'était* ***toujours*** *en Anglais.*
>
> *We spoke English, yes even in the classroom. And like in grades 7-8-9 there were rules...No you had to answer in French...you know that was*

the rule...well it was still a rule but yeah just like less held to...like "Yeah whatever! I just don't have the time to make them repeat it in French...You got a question and you get an answer, thanks". And between students it was ***always*** *in English.*

Although this may be an extreme example and is not necessarily representative of many French immersion high schools, it still speaks to the norms in the community changing once students become adolescents. As Tammy said, it seemed that teachers were concerned with getting the answers to their questions as quickly as possible and that asking students to repeat their answers in French would simply take too much time and effort. There is an apparent tension for French immersion teachers between teaching French language and teaching subject content in French.

Following the comment made above, the same participant noted that not having to follow the rule of 'speaking French' suited the students just fine at the time:

C'est difficile de tenir une atmosphère en français quand on brise les règles ici et par la ché pas comme quand j'étais là c'était pas grand-chose. 'Oh yeah, Anglais parfait! J'suis pas obligée de le donner en français!'.

It's difficult to keep up a French atmosphere when we break the rules but when I was there it wasn't a big deal. 'Oh yeah, English perfect! I don't have to give the answer in French!'

It is not unusual, even in Francophone schools, for adolescents to want to speak to their friends in English because it is the language of the greater society in which they

live. Because the French immersion students' social language was mainly English, even in elementary grades, the increased use of English in the upper grades is not so surprising. As in English high schools, it may be that at a certain point subject matter and course content become more important than explicit teaching of the language itself. It may simply be taken for granted that students should know enough of the language to master the content of different subject areas and that it is not the Science teacher's job to teach French grammar and speaking skills. This is often left up to the Language Arts teacher, who likely would be teaching literature and not grammar at this level. Of course it is recommended that 'language be taught across the curriculum', but with overloaded curricula, this may not always be easy to accomplish in practice. This is an area that needs to be investigated further in future studies.

As far as norms are concerned, it seems reasonable to conclude that English is the language of friendship and French is the language of school (at least until the secondary grade levels) for French immersion students. As Tammy explained :

> *C'est difficile parce qu'on parle en anglais à l'extérieur de l'école pis rendu en école c'est pas...c'est pas une mentalité d'école..c'est une mentalité d'amis...*
>
> *It's difficult because we speak English outside of school and then in school, well, it's not about a school mentality it's a friends mentality.*

For two of my participants, speaking English while living in the K-12 French immersion community was not considered problematic, but rather was something that made their existence easier. Joanne was the exception and she spoke about realizing that

it was important to speak French even in high school, but she admitted to being one of the only ones who did.

> *J'ai essayé de parler en français le plus possible et..on ne parlait pas vraiment le français hors de l'école mais à l'école je faisais l'effort de parler comme dans le cours de français ..j'étais parmi peut-être les seuls (rire)..J'pense que c'était conscient plus tard en neuvième dixième pas trop mais après j'ai commencé de me rendre compte que je dois utiliser mon français parce que en onzième j'suis allée en échange et je voulais être préparée et puis..faulait m'améliorer et je savais que c'était la seule façon de le faire alors...*
>
> *I try to speak in French as much as possible...we didn't really speak in French outside of school but in school I made an effort especially like in our French class...but I was perhaps one of the only ones who did (laughter). I think it became conscious later on in grade nine and ten, not a lot, but after I started to realize that I had to use my French because in grade eleven I was going on an exchange (to France) and I wanted to be prepared...so I had to get better and I knew it was the only way to do it.*

Joanne is an example of a student who sought additional French language experiences outside of the French immersion context by participating for a month in a student exchange in France. Here she recollected this experience:

> *En France pour un mois et puis c'était trop trop long mais c'était assez bonne expérience pour aller et puis après um mon partenaire d'échange*

est venue ici alors quand ils sont venus ici on a parlé beaucoup en français ici aussi alors je pense que cette expérience m'a aidé beaucoup...

In France for one month and it was very very long but it was a good experience having gone and um..my exchange partner came here so when they were here we spoke a lot in French here too so I think this experience helped me a lot.

As one of the more proficient students, it must be noted that although Joanne did try to resist the norm of speaking in English rather than French in school, this was not always easy because it went against the norm in this context. Ultimately, she sought experiences in French outside the actual French immersion community. Normatively then, while it is not impossible to find students who speak French on the immersion landscape, it appears difficult for these students to go against the norm of using English amongst themselves. It seems more likely that students will speak in English with each other especially in social situations and with increasing likelihood as they move up through the grade levels, where speaking French often becomes less enforced by teachers.

To conclude, it appears that in many French immersion classrooms although students are strongly encouraged to speak French by their teachers in the elementary grades, they often speak English when not under direct supervision. Although frustrating for teachers, there does seem to be an understanding, as Fraser Child (1998) found, that this will happen in such a program where the classroom is often the only place that students ever hear French and are called to speak it (or in the hallways and office if they are in an immersion centre rather than a dual-track setting). The fact that these students come from English speaking families who know no or little French, is something that

shapes the French immersion landscape into one where French is a 'school language' and not a 'lived' language. As noted in the review of the literature, in terms of French proficiency, students in French immersion programs often have quite limited skills when it comes to being able to fulfill their social and work needs in their second language (Webster, 1986). This is not surprising since building friendships in the French immersion setting is done for the most part in English and not in French. In the last section of this chapter, I discuss the consequences of this norm once the students attempt to move to a community that is constructed with very different norms in regards to the use of French.

Lugones' 3rd criteria:

- Being *humanly bonded.* I am with those I like and they like me too.

Students in French immersion programs are mostly Anglophones who come from English speaking families and neighbourhoods. They play with the children who live closest to them who are often English speaking. Most after-school activities are pursued in English, where French immersion students are likely to make friends once again in English. In their French immersion contexts, as the many studies reviewed in Chapter Two have indicated, French immersion students communicate with each other in English especially when they are interacting socially. In Tammy's case, speaking English to one's friends is indisputable:

> *...quand j'suis avec mes amis, j'parle en anglais.*
>
> *...when I'm with my friends, I speak in English.*

Even Joanne, who stated above that she made an effort to speak French in high school, admitted to speaking for the most part only in English with her group of close friends, even to this day:

> *J'ai jamais eu des amis qui étaient Francophones parce que dans le programme d'immersion c'était tous des anglophones alors um..on parlait on se parlait en français à l'école mais..comme..um.. dans notre temps libre c'était toujours en Anglais et j'ai j'ai encore plusieurs des mêmes amis et on se parle toujours en anglais.*
>
> *I've never had friends who were Francophones because in the immersion program we were all Anglophones so um...we spoke...we spoke in French at school but...like...um..in our free time it was always in English and I have many of the same friends and we always speak to each other in English.*

In an environment such as the French immersion one, it is only natural that students form relationships in the English language as they are more at-ease in their first language than in their second. Therefore in this third category it can be understood that in the immersion context, French is accepted as an academic language but English is, for the most part, the language in which students bond and create friendships with each other. This is perhaps the most critical criteria in the construction of the French immersion community or perhaps any community, since the threat of social isolation is perhaps human kind's greatest fear. One creates friendships through language and the language one speaks often determines with whom one will relate. In the case of my French

immersion participants, they considered themselves Anglophones and related to each other as such.

Lugones' 4th criteria:

- Having a *'shared daily history'*. I know the same things the people around me know. We can talk because we have things in common. We remember the same things and can ask each other questions like, "Do you remember poodle skirts?"and be understood by those who surround us.

Outside of school, French immersion students live their lives mostly in English. They usually speak English at home with their parents, they watch television and play video games in English, they play and fight with their siblings in this language and they hang out with the neighbourhood children who are most likely also English speaking. For Lugones (2003), a shared daily history is made up of two different types of histories. First is the dimension of cultural history which includes traditions, the particular culture of one's immediate and extended family, food dishes, ways of dressing, ways of speaking, religious beliefs and historical knowledge of one's country or region. The second type of this history, Lugones calls, 'shared daily history' which include events or activities that we have in common or that we participate in together. These can be tied to popular culture such as favourite television shows that a group might watch or the music of a particular rock group they like to listen to, or reading circles of people who have read the same authors. Today that shared daily history could be cyber groups on the internet that know and respond to the same things, bloggers for instance who write to each other about their favourite television episodes.

French immersion students, of course, consider themselves primarily English speaking Canadians. In this sense, they relate to the history of Anglophones living in Canada with its particular traditions. In this sense they are no different from many other English speaking Canadians in this country. In many French immersion classrooms, students are introduced to various French Canadian traditions like Le Bonhomme Carnaval, la cabane à sucre, and traditional French Canadian songs and dances etc., but as Louise explained, she was not easily able to integrate these into her reality as an English Canadian:

> *C'était seulement l'année passée que j'ai finalement compris qu'est-ce que c'était la cabane à sucre. Je n'ai jamais su qu'est-ce que c'était même si on le faisait à chaque année à mon école.*
>
> *It was only last year that I finally understood what the 'cabane à sucre' was. I've never known what it was even if we did it every year at school.*

Although it can be said that English speaking Canadians and French speaking Canadians share some common history simply because they inhabit the same country, there are a great many traditions, idiomatic expressions, meals, religious experiences, ways of dressing, celebrations, music, television shows and movies that we experience growing up as either French Canadians or English Canadians that are particular to each group. For instance, if I am with a group of French Canadians and I mention something about "les Bonnes Soeurs" [the good Sisters] or watching "Bobino et Bobinette" [a children's television show] there likely will be a collective nod from all those who have had these types of experiences. The same will happen when I am with English Canadians and I speak of having watched 'Sesame Street' or the 'Friendly Giant'. Each group

collectively remembers different things in relation to the community in which they were raised and therefore they hold different things in common. In this sense even though all French immersion students might learn about certain French Canadian traditions, it is impossible for them to go back and *live* them as French Canadians have. And even if they were to live them as adults they likely would not understand the heritage underlying these events well enough to fully appropriate them. In this sense all that non-French Canadians can ever really do is construct history forward, in the context in which they now find themselves. The fact that the only real Francophone models these students have are their teachers, and these teachers usually come from a range of French backgrounds, they may get a fairly piecemeal and inauthentic instruction in regards to French Canadian culture and heritage.

In general, French immersion students are from English speaking families and even if they can trace their familial roots to another country, it is likely not a French one. Also most of these students remain fairly unaware of the historical tensions between English and French speaking Canadians. While they may have learned about it in history books, the consequences of these tensions do not seem to have touched them in their everyday lives. This is often not the case for Francophones, who may often have been reminded of what it means to live as a linguistic minority in Canada, translating into the need to protect their language and heritage in order not to be assimilated into the English majority.

The second dimension of Lugones' criteria of *shared daily histories* is a history, not understood as something that exists solely in the past, but rather as something that we construct and co-construct with those closest to us…one day at a time….through the

events that we share and the things we like and have in common. Therefore according to Lugones' definition, history is a double movement. It is grounded in a common past that I share with those most like me, who know and use the same words that I do, that hold the same normative values as I, who come from the same bigger community that I do and who remember and are interested in the same things as I am. Secondly, it is constructed forward as I inhabit the same space as others and create new histories between us. Of course this construction can only happen when in genuine relationship for when a certain group is ostracized this construction cannot take place.

When a particular group shares all of Lugones' (2003) criteria of at-easeness we can say that they form what Friedman (1983) calls the 'community of affinity or likemindedness'. As seen so far, French immersion students do in fact seem to share a common language, understand and agree with the norms of their community, build friendships with likeminded others and share a common history with these others. In this type of community there is often little conflict as everyone is very much alike. The French immersion context as *community of affinity* can be conceptualized in Figure 1.

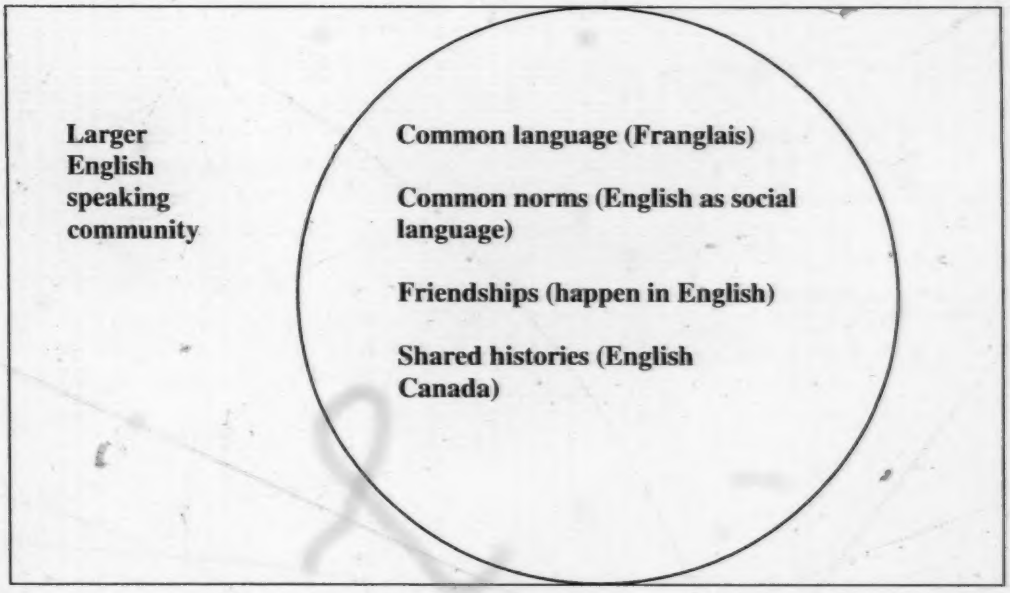
Larger English speaking community
Common language (Franglais)
Common norms (English as social language)
Friendships (happen in English)
Shared histories (English Canada)

Figure 1

French Immersion Community of Affinity

To conclude this chapter, I will speak briefly to what appears to happen to many French immersion students once they graduate from high school.

Transitions...

One of the difficulties for those students in French programs is that after grade 12 they lose their *community of affinity* – which oftentimes is the only place where they used French. Most students who experience this loss simply go back to using English by re-entering the larger surrounding community. This can be represented in Figure 2.

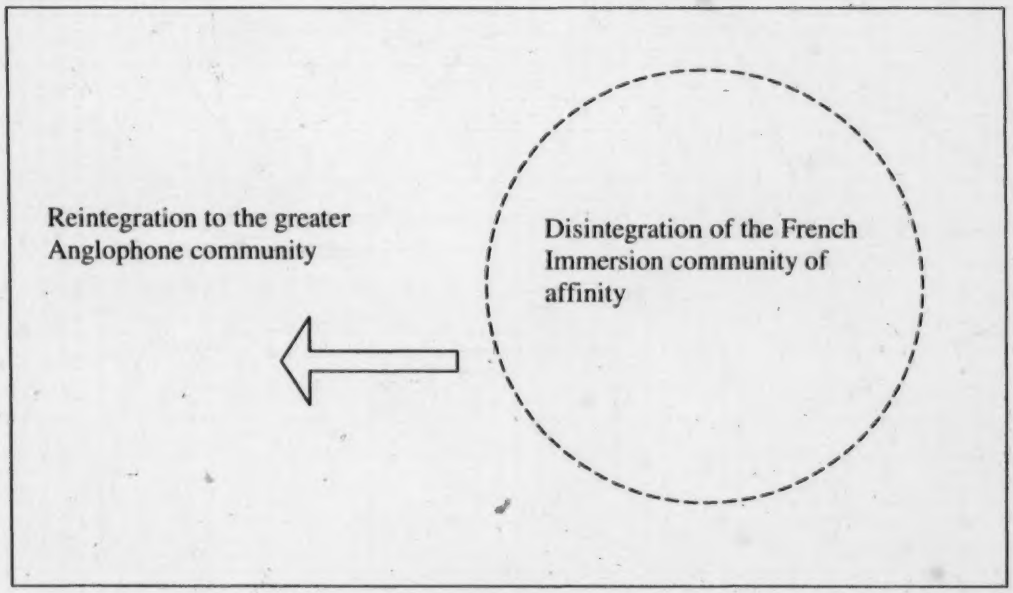

Figure 2

The Disintegration of a Community of Affinity

This loss of community has significant consequences for many of these students because the French immersion community was often the only place they ever used the French language. Lacking this community, many graduates of French immersion programs are simply reintegrated fully into the English speaking community and never or very rarely use the French language again. A few of them may go abroad and may have jobs such as that of nanny in a French speaking country for a year or so, but other than this type of experience, there are few places where graduates of the French immersion programs can use their second language.

A few French immersion students each year decide that they would like to re-enter the French immersion community of affinity by becoming French immersion teachers themselves. Of course there is no 'direct' route to accomplishing this career objective as students must first gain access to a specific type of post-secondary institution; one like the Campus Saint-Jean, which offers training to those wishing to become French teachers either in Francophone, French immersion or FSL programs. In Western Canada many graduates of French immersion schooling choose this institution. Figure 3 illustrates this transition.

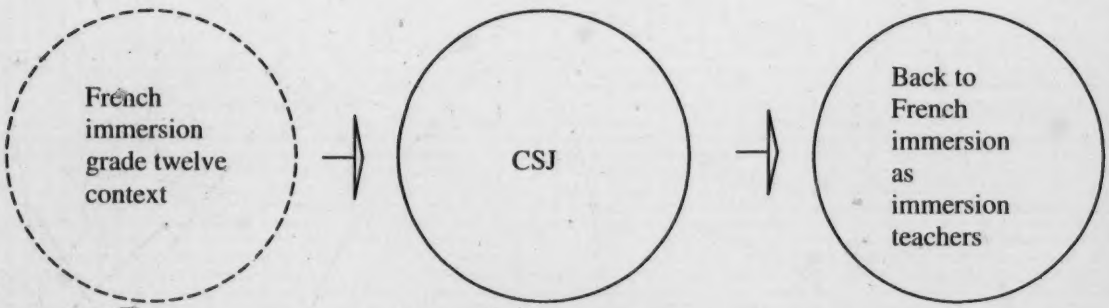

Figure 3

The Transition Between French Immersion and CSJ

In the next chapter, I apply Lugones' four criteria of at-easeness to the historical analysis of the Faculté Saint-Jean that I presented in Chapter Two, in order to make the argument that this institution was historically and ideologically constructed as a community of affinity.

CHAPTER SIX – FINDINGS

"Constructing the Campus Saint-Jean as a Community of Affinity"

Campus Saint-Jean

In this chapter, I attempt to answer the following question: *How is the Campus Saint-Jean constructed as a community of affinity?* To accomplish this I will refer to my own experiences as a student and instructor who has spent more than twenty years on this landscape, as well as to specific data gathered from the historical information presented in Levasseur-Ouimet's (1997) book, *Regards, paroles, gestes,* and to information provided by CSJ itself on the official university website. Once again, I use Lugones' four criteria of shared language; shared norms; shared friendships and shared histories in order to show how the Campus Saint-Jean has been constructed (as an ideal) Francophone community based in affinity and likemindedness. It is important to note that this construction does not represent the Campus Saint-Jean as it is in its reality today, but rather as an 'ideal' that it has and still does aspire to.

Lugones' 1st criteria:

- Being a *fluent speaker* – that is, I know all the *words* that make up a particular [community] and therefore feel confident speaking.

As stated in a previous section, I arrived at the Faculté Saint-Jean in 1983. At this time there were more Quebecois and French Canadians than there were Anglophones on this landscape. There, we lived for the most part in French. Although we came from various regions across Canada, most of us were comfortable interacting socially and

academically in the French language. What characterized this way of living in French was our ability to 'play' in the French language. While we may not have said things in the same way, we learned different regional expressions from each other by trying them on for size and seeing how well they suited us. This borrowing and playing with language reflects a certain at-easeness with the words and expressions that one uses in a language that one knows well.

Today it is certainly no secret that CSJ has, and still does, try to recruit as many Francophone students as possible (as was discussed in Chapter Two). The main reason for this strong recruitment policy is to ensure that students' linguistic competency in French is adequate, and secondly to ensure the continuing cultural climate of the institution. Before 1975 the institution had no way of judging the linguistic competency of its students, but when Anglophone numbers jumped dramatically in the mid 1970s, FSJ instituted a written and oral competency exam that all students were required to take.

Of particular interest for my study, is the oral exam that is administered to students entering the Education department at CSJ (an example of the oral exam is available online at: http://www.csj.ualberta.ca/cerf/formulairepdf). Those who score at the highest level on this test have, according to test criteria:

> very clear, precise, complete and original ideas; are convincing and creative in their arguments; are able to lead a conversation with assurance, with subtlety, using implicit statements, and are able extrapolate; are at-ease, animated, natural, can actively participate in the discussion and are efficient in their language use; have no difficulty understanding what is said to them not matter the speed, the accent, or the complex or implicit

> nature of the statements made by the evaluator; they have a constant and fluid rhythm to their speech; their pronunciation is similar to that of a Francophone, their speech is precise, and the choice of vocabulary is rich, precise and vast; they use idiomatic language and sentence formulations that are not repetitive; they demonstrate excellent use of verb forms and tenses, as well as grammatically complex sentences and demonstrate fine nuances through complex sentence structures. (University of Alberta website, 2006)

The criterion of 'pronunciation that is similar to that of a Francophone' is to be especially noted here as it indicates clearly that all students are being evaluated against the norms and criteria of a competent Francophone's way of speaking. Accordingly, the best student is likely to be Francophone or at least a student who speaks most like a Francophone. As noted in the last chapter, those students who have gone through a French immersion program often have their own unique way of speaking – sometimes called 'Immersionese' – this being a grammatically incorrect way of speaking that is often caused by a form of error fossilization that occurs in the program. Seeing that explicitly and/or implicitly, the CSJ test requires that one speak like a Francophone in order to score at the highest level, it is unlikely that many students who have come through the immersion program would attain this level. As many studies have shown, at least at the level of oral language, those individuals in French immersion programs were often in diglossic situations, having been exposed for the most part to a formal register which would likely not allow them to sound like Francophones. As well, the fact that students are assigned to different leveled classes according to the CSJ entrance test

results, makes it quite obvious to everyone who the strong French students are, with the weaker students being offered ways of improving their French skills through various services available at CSJ.

Adding to this already complex situation, is the fact that within what on the surface appears to be *one* French language, there runs deeper layerings of language(s) and accent(s) that create hierarchies of acceptance and/or rejection within the seemingly singular language. Manning (2003) explains this in the following way,

> I am puzzled by the notion that, despite the fact that difference always already resides within language, the claim to language in Quebec is one that rests on the assumption of similarity. The dissension between what it means to speak as a Quebecois as opposed to simply speaking as a Francophone results in a conflictual politics that creates a rift between language as the means to convey a sense of origin and language as a tool that challenges us to communicate across borders and nationalities…There is, in Quebec sovereignty politics, both a desire to be open to a global/local politics of difference and the need to hold on to a racial politics that silences alterity. This is apparent in many facets of political life in Quebec, though never as obvious as through the politics of language, where being "Quebecois" – as opposed to being simply "French-Canadian" or "Francophone" – relies on what is too often a linear historical narrative spoken in the discernible accent of the Quebecois *pur-laine.* (p.124)

An example of this hidden curriculum would be when two French speakers meet usually the first thing one person will ask the other is "D'ou viens-tu?" (Where are you from?). Whenever I am on the receiving end of this question, I realize that the person that I am speaking with has detected my accent and is trying to place me geographically and to a certain extent politically. Therefore, at the Faculté Saint-Jean, even when a large part of the student population was made up of French Canadians, there was always the possibility of 'not fitting in well' simply because of one's accent or place of origin. Generally, though, in the early 1980s there was a strong enough base in French to permit students to be playful with the language and adapt their ways of speaking to that of the group. It is in this sense that according to Lugones' first criteria we did understand and know the same words and ways of speaking which allowed us to thrive as a French speaking community.

While I do not address all these levels of complexity directly in my study, it is to be noted that it isn't simply the high score on the entrance test that counts in a linguistic community such as the one at CSJ, but that (at least implicitly) within the French language there are also *ways of speaking* (including accent; vocabulary and idiomatic expressions) that indicate not only where the student is from but whether or not their way of speaking is valued. Needless to say, 'Immersionese' would likely rate quite low on this hierarchy. This is an interesting and important path that could be explored in future research. It would also be important to look more closely at just how well French immersion students in general perform on this type of entrance test. As will be shown in the next section, two out of the three participants in this study did not succeed very well on that test.

In considering Lugones' first criterion of being a *fluent speaker* in the language as well as knowing all the words of the said community, the institutional criteria of what it means to be a good or even an excellent French speaker are quite obviously laid out in the oral competency exam administered by CSJ. These criteria do seem to indicate that those students most likely to succeed and be considered fluent in French, as well as having achieved a significant at-easeness in the language, would be Francophones or native speakers. Add to this Manning's statement about the historical and cultural ways in which the French language in Canada has developed methods to implicitly judge a French speaker according to his or her accent, speech patterns and place of origin, and we come away with an extremely complex picture of how speaking French *well* is valued at CSJ.

It is to be noted that while CSJ has had to open its doors to all levels of French speakers, it still actively seeks to recruit Francophones and those most proficient in the French language. As Tomlinson and Lapkin indicated, although necessary, the solution of bringing in Anglophones to compensate for low Francophone numbers, does not always sit well with Francophone stakeholders.

> Some Francophones argue that the presence of Anglophones in their institutions has been detrimental to the linguistic and cultural development of minority students. As in Ontario, they would prefer a return to homogeneous Francophone institutions. (1989, p.5)

To conclude, while CSJ has likely never been in any true sense a completely homogeneous Francophone institution, it has, as indicated by its history, striven to be as close to this ideal as possible by actively seeking to recruit Francophones and by

evaluating all students' French language proficiency according to Francophone criteria on its oral entrance exam. This points to how CSJ as a Francophone institution has long been grounded in a sense of linguistic affinity rather than one of otherness.

Lugones' 2nd criteria:

- Being *normatively happy*. I am familiar with the norms of this [community] and the norms help me know how to behave appropriately.

On the official university website (http://www.fsj.ualberta.ca), Campus Saint-Jean is identified as a Francophone institution. Naming itself as such brings with it certain implicit and explicit normative expectations. The most obvious is that students wishing to study at CSJ should be ready to communicate in French at all times. For students who choose to live at the Saint-Jean residence, speaking French is not only an implicit institutional expectation but is the written policy of the General Faculties Council (http://www.uofaweb.ualberta.ca/gfcpolicymanual/content.cfm?ID_page=39026&section=39069&contentshow=section) (2005) of the University of Alberta. Found in section 98.3 under 'Residence Community Standards', the Community Norms at the Saint-Jean Residence (normes communautaires de la Résidence Saint-Jean) are listed. According to this policy, all students wishing to live at the Saint-Jean residence must first sign a document in which they agree to use French as the language of communication. Students are considered in violation of this policy if they are found to not be making sufficient efforts to speak French (24 hrs a day/ 7 days a week) in all public areas. They are also considered in violation if their efforts at speaking French are deemed insufficient while they are in their room with the door open, since this is considered to have an impact upon

students who may be in nearby public areas. A student who has had three warnings from a residence monitor for not making sufficient efforts to speak French, can then be expelled.

Such a policy clearly indicates the extent to which CSJ expects its students to communicate in French at all times. While this normative expectation is more explicitly laid out in the case of the CSJ Residence, implicit expectations are obvious in the academic and administrative buildings where all staff are Francophones. Virtually all written material, whether displayed on the walls, on the website, or in informational pamphlets, is in French. Communication among professors, administrative personnel and students, is always conducted in French. The janitors and all technicians speak only in French. In other words, it is possible to live 'only' in French on this landscape if one so wishes, and it is an implicit and explicit expectation that all students coming to CSJ will do so.

Lugones' 3rd criteria:

- Being *humanly bonded*. I am with those I like and they like me too

Many students originally from Québec or from other Canadian provinces who come to study at CSJ remain in Alberta to teach and become part of the Francophone community. Some of these Francophone students marry and have children whom they are now raising in French. CSJ has long been considered a small island or 'a small Francophone gem,' as it calls itself on its website today, to which many Francophones gravitate in order to meet other Francophones. Advertising itself as a Francophone institution sends out the message to Francophones that CSJ is a place where they will be

able to meet other Francophones, especially in the case of those just arriving in Alberta and who find themselves in such an overwhelmingly Anglophone province. According to Levasseur-Ouimet (1996) the role of the Francophone school, like the one at CSJ, is of the utmost importance "for minority Francophone communities in the West [as] the school is the very best way to ensure the future of French …The school is one of the minority Francophone community's greatest assets". (n.p.)

The Francophone school or the Francophone university has always been considered by Francophones to be a place of gathering and strengthening. This type of place points to a site where Francophones can humanly bond with those most like themselves in order to strengthen what they value most. In this sense it is a community based in affinity.

During my time at the Faculté Saint-Jean, I made numerous friends, many of whom I have kept for over twenty years. I consider these friends to be my French community here in Edmonton – an island in a sea of English. I have also become friends with many who were once my professors and who are now my colleagues at Campus Saint-Jean. I have come away feeling a deep affinity and a sense of community with these people who value the French language as I do.

Lugones' 4th criteria:

- Having a *'shared daily history'*. I know the same things the people around me know. We can talk because we have things in common. We remember the same things.

In her 1996 speech at a national symposium on Canada's Official Languages, Levasseur-Ouimet spoke of three major movements characterizing Franco-Albertans' struggle to maintain their language. The first (roughly from 1892-1968), she calls 'Survival'. Here:

> The [Francophone] community first sought to preserve the rights it already had. It had to defend its rights several times, and each proposed amendment to the *Education Act* was closely scrutinized for fear that it would diminish minority school rights even more… we could say that communities turned their gaze inwards during this first stage. (n.p.)

The second stage (after 1968), according to Levasseur-Ouimet, was the point at which,

> Minority Francophone communities began to look outwards and sought to promote the question of rights. One could perhaps call this second stage 'overtures and the search for legitimacy'… In summarizing this second period, it is important to note that it was then that we shifted from the teaching of French to teaching in French. It is also the time that Francophone communities saw an opportunity to increase the legitimacy of French in Canada. (n.p.)

The third stage, which she called, "return to our roots" began with:

> Section 23 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* and the decision of the Supreme Court [that] established the political legitimacy of French education…with Francophones now having the right to legitimately manage their schools" (n.p.).

This storyline of 'survival' of the minority group within the larger English Canadian majority is widespread, though perhaps not lived by all. As Levasseur-Ouimet indicates, Francophones in minority situations, whether in Alberta or other provinces, have had to fight long and hard to obtain their own school boards and schools where their children could be educated in French. Although not every Francophone in a minority context necessarily would claim to have *lived* this cultural theme of 'survival,' most would likely be aware of it. For Levasseur-Quimet (1996), the importance of the Francophone school in Alberta cannot be understated because:

> The school is always the best place to pass on language and culture and, as a result, to ensure the presence of the minority Francophone community in the future. More than just teaching language, it must also see to the culture that supports and expresses language. I define culture as a way of being, doing, seeing oneself, liking oneself, feeling, organizing, listening to oneself, as well as attitudes and values. I believe that we must decide now as a community what attitudes, values, ways of being and acting we need to survive and develop and live in French in Alberta. (n.p.)

Therefore, even though French Canadians may come from many different parts of the country they often share many of the same traditions or at least have knowledge of these traditions. In this sense, they understand each other when someone speaks of 'la Messe de Minuit'; le Réveillon' or 'la tourtière' and 'le boudin.' Again, although it cannot be said that French Canadians have all lived the exact same histories, in general they are conscious of many of the themes that run through this history. Sharing many of the same historical storylines allows French Canadians to co-construct a shared daily

lived history on the Campus Saint-Jean landscape. Unavoidably, this co-construction often will involve themes based in a 'protectionist' and a 'survivalist' attitude, as seen in a statement made in 1983 by then Dean, Gamilla Morcos:

> We belong to a massively Anglophone province but far from discouraging us, it has pushed us rather to face the challenge. We have the conviction and, I believe, have demonstrated that a superior quality of instruction can be offered in the French language and that our language is a carrier of progress and of generosity…La Faculté distinguishes herself by intense activity and diversity. She represents a Francophone centre infinitely precious, at the heart of the Western provinces, a privileged link where young bilinguals are trained and affirmed. (translated by Skogen from Levasseur-Ouimet, 1997, p.64)

Here the term 'bilingual' likely does not refer to second language students coming from French immersion programs. Rather the 'bilinguals' Morcos seems to be referring to are most likely those who speak fluent French as well as fluent English. While immersion students are expected to achieve a 'functional bilingualism,' the bilinguals, of whom Morcos speaks, are most likely those who have achieved a 'balanced bilingualism'.

As Morcos' speech indicates, themes of 'protectionism' and 'survival' have been woven throughout the common history of CSJ. Through this shared history runs the belief that if Francophones do not seal themselves off from the overwhelming English influence outside their doors, they will be unable to sustain their French language and heritage – in other words, they will be assimilated by the Anglophones. Those Francophones at CSJ

who share a common way of speaking (French), accept certain norms of behaviour (French is spoken at all times), build their friendships in French as well as have shared common histories, traditions and beliefs, can be considered a community based in affinity or likemindedness, a construction which can be illustrated by the model presented in Figure 4.

Figure 4

**Community of Affinity
At Campus Saint-Jean**

The Meeting of Two Different Communities of Affinity

Using Lugones' (2003) four criteria of at-easeness, I have shown how both the French immersion and the Campus Saint-Jean contexts can be understood as separate communities of affinity, based in certain commonalities and likemindedness. The need of

human beings to locate themselves in groups or 'homophily,' as Lazersfeld and Merton (1964) have called it, speaks to our "strong tendency…to seek out those who are similar to ourselves" (p.154). As already indicated in Chapter Three, whether we are speaking of a community, a tribe, a family or what we might today call a 'network', these groupings can be seen as "a protection against otherness" (Friedman, 1983, p.133). Therefore, whether we are referring to the French immersion student who speaks in a specific way and has lived certain unique experiences in an immersion classroom, or if it is the Campus Saint-Jean with its striving to keep the French language and culture alive through its protectionist storylines, both, in the end, can be understood as communities of affinity. Buber and Friedman (1983) both understand the community of affinity as a type of "commune, cell or blessed community…consigning everything else to total meaninglessness" (p.136). Buber believed that the community of affinity is "always ultimately false community" as it resists diversity and otherness. The blessed community is one where the self-protection engaged in by the community members creates the felt need to cast out the one who "raises its anxieties or threatens its happy harmony" (p.138). In regards to creating this type of harmony, Ruest (1996) has noted:

> I think that we come back to the essential problem of national unity. How are we going to achieve that? I think that what we wanted to achieve in the past was to ensure a Francophone presence throughout Canada and an Anglophone presence in Quebec, so that people could live in some kind of harmony… Learning French as a second language by immersion had the specific goal of demonstrating that openness. Currently, we extol the advantage of learning one, two or three languages, but we seem to forget

> Canadian social and political dimensions. Why is it important to know two languages? Why is it important to have dynamic Francophone-minority communities? We often have a tendency to apply the same remedy no matter what the situation. We must be more imaginative I think. (n.p.)

It is in this sense that striving to live in harmony with the Other by becoming more like him or her (in this case, learning to speak the same language) can be understood as rooted in the belief that the more alike we are – the more we will get along. But in truth, striving for likeness, living in harmony, valuing tolerance and loyalty, all tend to create a community based in affinity, leaving little room for the unfolding of personal uniqueness and difference. When two different communities of affinity meet, it is often their differences that are highlighted. Although French immersion students may have technically lost their community of affinity upon entering CSJ, in a sense they still carry it within them. Therefore, when those arriving from the immersion community find themselves in a Francophone community like the one at CSJ, often it is not what makes the two groups the same that is highlighted but rather what makes them different. This meeting or what Friedman (1983) calls "mismeeting".

Figure 5 shows how even though both the French immersion community and the community at CSJ have the teaching and learning of French in common, they remain worlds apart when it comes to the type of words that are spoken by each, the different norms they abide by, the way they make friends and the histories they have inherited.

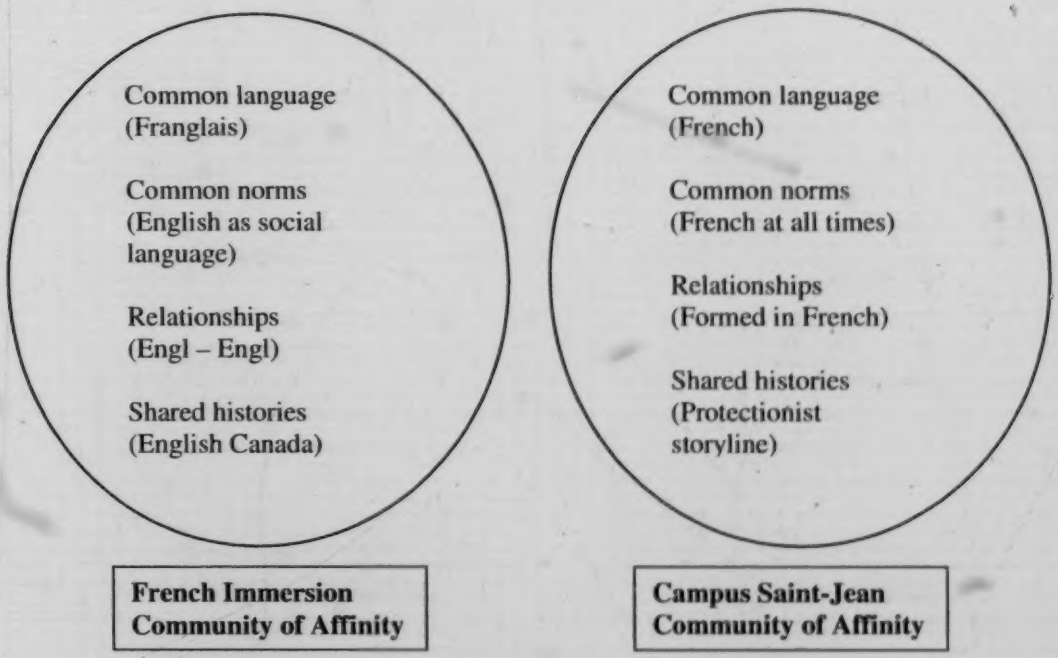

Figure 5

Dissonant Constructions of the Two Communities

One major complicating factor is the French-Canadians' protectionist and survivalist storyline, which runs through the community of affinity at Saint-Jean, as it brings with it the felt need to protect against the Anglophone influence. It is therefore easy to imagine the potential tensions that may arise as an increasing number of English-speaking students make their way onto this landscape.

In the next chapter I explore what happens when French immersion students coming from one community of affinity constructed by its own language, norms, relationships and histories, attempt to move to another albeit very different community of

affinity (Campus Saint-Jean) with its own understandings of language, appropriate norms, people and histories.

CHAPTER SEVEN - FINDINGS

"Consequences of the Dissonant Constructions of Both Communities of Affinity"

Campus-Saint-Jean 'Mirrors' Who the French Immersion Student Is...

When students have spent most of their lives within one type of community of affinity, there is a certain 'taken-for-grantedness' of the experience. Because most French immersion students have spent little time in any other type of French learning environment, it is natural for them to have a fairly narrow understanding of what it means to be a native French speaker. Their sense of proficiency in the French language has been mirrored to them uniquely by teachers, administrators and parents on the immersion landscape. What remains hidden from the students is the fact that their levels of proficiency are judged against the norms, values and goals of the immersion program and not those of their Francophone counterparts. Tapp (1995) discussed the importance of evaluating French immersion students using different language descriptors than those "commonly used to evaluate native-speakers, standards against which these students often do not rate well" (Sanaoui, 2002, p.70). This is perhaps something that should be considered at CSJ when it comes to the criteria that are used in the competency exams administered to French immersion graduates.

Because most of the research carried out on immersion programs has offered a very positive picture of who these students are (see Chapter Two) in contrast to their English-only counterparts, it is natural that French immersion students have been given the impression that they are 'success stories' and, of course, in many ways they are. This is especially so in the case of those students who managed to complete a full French

immersion program from K-12. My participants reported that they were told at their grade twelve graduation that they were now to be considered fully bilingual. This type of comment led Louise in particular, to believe that:

> *C'est l'immersion; on est supposé d'être complètement bilingue!*
>
> *It's immersion; we're supposed to be completely bilingual!*

Unfortunately, many administrators and teachers did not mention and/or define the word 'functional' when referring to the students' bilingualism. Because of their limited experiences in French, these graduates simply 'assumed' that they were in fact fluent in French or nearly as fluent as their Francophone counterparts. Both Louise and Tammy spoke of the shock and the betrayal they felt toward those who had led them to believe that they would be able to function successfully in French in a Francophone setting like the one at the Campus Saint-Jean.

> *...et c'était vraiment un défi et je pense que c'était parce que ..j'étais tellement déçue parce que à la fin de douzième année j'étais un des plus forts dans la classe et je pense que j'étais la seule qui voulait continuer en français – ils ont dit les les enseignants et même les enseignants Francophones ont dit, « Tu es très bien..tu peux parler très bien en français tu peux communiquer très bien en français tu n'auras aucune problème »...Et puis avec la Faculté ils ont la test de d'admission et je pensais, « Oh whatever (tappe des mains). Je vais (rire)... je vais faire tellement bien sur ça et ils m'ont mis pas dans le plus pire classe mais au milieu et j'étais comme, « What? Mais...Comment ça se peut?» Et*

vraiment j'étais naïve et je pensais, « Okay je sais que je ne peux pas faire les examens alors je vais faire deux ou trois cours dans ce milieu et ils vont savoir qu'ils ont fait une erreur…et j'étais tellement déçue parce que j'ai compris tout à un moment que oh…okay je ne suis pas assez bonne… au temps là c'était vraiment…je ne sais pas si je veux continuer…

…and it was really a challenge and I think it was because…I was so disappointed because at the end of grade 12, I was one of the strongest in my class and I think that I was the only one that wanted to continue in French – they [her teachers] said…you can speak very well in French and you can communicate very well in French..you won't have any problems…And then at the Faculté they have this admission test and I thought, "Oh whatever (claps hands). I will (laughter)… do so well on that!" And then they put me in one of the worst (lowest) classes, not the very worst but in the middle and I was like, "What? But…How can this be?" And really I was naïve and I thought, "Okay, I see that I can't do the exams so I will take two or three courses in this middle level and then they'll realize that they made a mistake"…and I was so disappointed because I understood at one point that "Okay I wasn't good"…at that time, I didn't know if I wanted to go on.

Having this different, less able 'self' mirrored back to her in this way, Louise in particular expressed her anger at those who had taught her in the French immersion program:

J'étais déçue parce qu'ils (enseignants et administrateurs en immersion) ont dit quelque chose. Moi, je m'identifie comme une personne qui aime communiquer. Je pensais que je pouvais communiquer assez bien en français. J'ai appris que ce n'était pas vrai. Alors, j'étais déçue à plusieurs niveaux. J'étais déçue parce qu'ils ont menti. Selon moi, ils ont menti.

I felt let down because they (teachers and administrators in French immersion) said one thing. Me, I identify myself as a person that loves to communicate. I thought I could communicate well enough in French. I learned this wasn't true. So I was disappointed on many levels. I was disappointed because they lied. As far as I'm concerned they lied.

For Louise the consequence of feeling betrayed translated into a complete lack of motivation in her first two years of study, as she says:

...mes notes en premier..deuxième année ..n'étaient pas si bonnes..parce que ..j'étais assez jeune et un peu têtue alors quand j'ai quand je me suis um..trouvée dans cette situation j'ai dit, « Why should I bother? » parce qu'ils vont me dire soit que je ne suis pas assez bon ou ..que je suis bon et c'est pas la vérité alors ..je ne veux pas vraiment..alors j'ai presque complètement décroché ..j'ai fait seulement ce que je DEVAIS faire pour passer les cours et pas plus ...

... my marks in my first and second year were not so good because...I was young and a little stubborn and when I found myself in this situation I said

to myself, "Why should I bother?" because they'll just tell me either that I'm not good enough or they'll say I'm good enough but they'll be lying so...I didn't really want to...I almost completely gave up...I only did what I needed to do to pass my courses and nothing more..

Louise then explained how she experienced a lack of support and a sense of not belonging in the new community at CSJ:

Moi, je voulais appartenir. Et, pour moi, personnellement, parce que la communication et la langue en général c'est tellement important pour moi. Apprendre n'importe quelle langue. Je voulais l'appui. « Oui tu as fait une bonne chose et bravo. Continuez à travailler comme ça parce que tu travailles très fort. » Pas « ça vaut rien, il faut travailler fort. » Juste dans cette phrase tu dis carrément que tu n'as pas travaillé fort. C'est la façon de le dire. Il y a deux façons de dire les choses. Il y a la façon que les étudiants vont mettre les choses dedans leurs propres cerveaux. Il y a aussi une façon qui ne laisse aucune interprétation. « Oui t'as fait un bon travail. Je veux que tu continues à travailler ça. »

Me, I wanted to belong. And for me personally because communication and language in general are so important to me – learning any language. I wanted support. "Yes you are doing good things.. good work!" Instead of "it's not worth anything – you need to work harder!" Just in this sentence alone you are categorically saying that I have not worked hard! It's the way it's said. There are two ways of saying things. There's a way where students will make appropriate meaning of what is happening and

then there is the way that leaves absolutely no room for interpretation. Say, "Yes you did good work. I want you to continue to work like that!"

Louise believed, in fact, that this situation likely leads many to drop out of the program:

Je pense que même dans ma première année qu'on a perdu beaucoup d'élèves à cause de ça. Ce n'est pas nécessairement que les cours étaient difficiles. C'est parce que, dès le début, les élèves ne voulaient pas travailler parce qu'ils [ceux qui ont le pouvoir au CSJ] nous a dit que tout ce qu'on a fait à ce point ça ne vaut rien quand même.

I think in my first year we lost students because of that. It was not necessarily that the courses were too difficult. But it was because, right from the start, the students didn't want to work because they [those in power at CSJ] had told us that everything we had done up to this point was worth nothing anyways...

While she had, with the passing of time, come to reconsider this harsh stance, Louise still felt that she should have been warned that her French skills were possibly not sufficiently developed to allow her to easily pursue post-secondary education completely in French. While from a different perspective, such as that of the Community of Practice, one might argue that it is not that she needed the competence prior to entry but rather needed to gain entry in order to become competent, there is still the expectation (at the time of this study at least) that students need to be competent in French before arriving at

CSJ. Interestingly, Louise never said that the institution should reduce its expectations of her, but simply be a little more empathetic to her situation:

> *Même si oui, en comparaison avec les autres élèves de ma classe, j'étais assez bonne. Ils [enseignants/administrateurs] ont dû dire quelque chose comme « T'es bon, mais... » Juste m'avertir. Et l'autre, je pense que quand ils [les évaluateurs au CJS] m'ont mis dans cette niveau-là, ils auraient dû chasser cette phrase avec « Il faut travailler très fort. Il faut travailler très fort pour arriver à un niveau acceptable, blah, blah, blah. » Pour moi, j'ai dit, « Mais, j'ai déjà travaillé fort et maintenant tu me dis que le travail que je fais n'est pas assez ! Alors, qu'est-ce que je vais faire ? » C'est vraiment que je ne comprenais pas que les leçons que je vais apprendre à la Faculté vont être différentes que l'école secondaire. Je n'ai pas compris ça. Alors, c'était un peu d'immaturité de ma part mais, quand même, ce n'était vraiment pas expliquer. Quand tu lances une personne dans cette situation, surtout une personne de 17, 18 ans, qui n'a aucune expérience sauf l'école secondaire, ils vont voir cela comme « Tu n'es pas assez bon. » Je peux dire maintenant que non, ce n'est pas ça qu'ils voulaient faire. Mais, c'est comme ça que j'ai interprété ça. Ils devraient savoir que peut-être la façon qu'ils disent les choses c'est vraiment important parce que cet élève qui entre de l'immersion pense vraiment qu'ils sont bons parce que les personnes de maternelle jusqu'à douzième ont dit ça. Et maintenant tu vas les frapper*

avec ces nouvelles et il ne faut pas complètement dire le prochain jour « ok, maintenant tu dois travailler plus fort. » C'est un choc!...

Even if yes, in comparison to other students in my class, I was fairly good. They should have said, "You are good...but...". Just to have warned me. And the other thing, I think that when they (the evaluators at CSJ) placed me in a certain level, and then ended the phrase with « you will have to work very hard. You will have to work very hard in order to arrive at an acceptable level, blah, blah, blah." I said to myself, "But I already have worked very hard and now you are telling me that's it's not enough! Well what am I to do?" It's really that I didn't understand that the expectations at the Faculté would be so different than the ones in high school. I didn't understand that. So it was a certain level of immaturity on my part but still it was never explained. When you throw someone into this type of situation, especially someone that is only 17 or 18 years old, who has no other experiences other than the high school one, they will naturally interpret this as "You're just not good enough!" I can say now, that this wasn't the situation.. that this wasn't their intention but that is the way that I interpreted it. They (those at CSJ) should know that maybe the way they say things is really important because those coming from French immersion honestly believe that they are good (in French) because everyone [teachers] has been telling them this since Kindergarten all the way to grade 12 and now you're going to hit them with this news. It's just

you shouldn't tell them the day after they graduate from an immersion program that they must work harder. It's a shock!

Crisler (1977) explained this type of shock, when a person from one community of affinity enters a very different one, in the following way,

> as each individual enters the new…constellation, she/he is exposed to unfamiliar customs and relationship responses. Everything from food habits…rituals, expectations, values, verbal and nonverbal communications, myths…must be coped with successfully in order to adjust in the new way of life… it seems logical that breakdown in human trust and relationships, following lack of understanding of this culture shock experience, could lead to eventual breakdown in the individual personality, inability to function socially within the system, and finally to fragmentation of the new…constellation. (p.3)

I believe that this is exactly what happens to many second language students when they enter CSJ. Not being aware of their actual level of competence, they are shocked to discover they are much less proficient in French than they were led to believe in the immersion program.

In the next section of this chapter, I present my findings about what happens to the French immersion students as they try to integrate into the community at CSJ. To do this I will once again apply Lugones' (2003) four criteria of *knowing the words; the norms; the people and the histories.*

1. Not Knowing the Social Words Equals not Being Able to Make Friends

One of the first things that French immersion graduates become aware of on this new landscape is their lack of ability to communicate in French, especially when it comes to the use of language in social situations.

As Tammy recalled :

> *Arrivée ici..je parlais pas..je rendu compte que ..wow..est-ce que je peux même prendre mes cours ici à la Fac? Ché pas comment même tenir une conversation...est-ce que j'ai jamais été capable de parler en français? Puis là c'était comme..c'était difficile..mais mes profs me demandaient une question ..ou là j'avais un question à poser et je ne pouvais pas demander...*
>
> *When I arrived here, I didn't speak...I realized that...wow can I even take courses here at the Fac? I don't even know how to hold a conversation...Have I ever been able to speak in French? And then it was difficult...like my profs would ask me a question..or like I had a question and I couldn't ask...*

For Tammy it was obvious that because of the amount of English usage that was permitted in high school, she suffered not only at the social level but in academic situations as well when she first arrived at CSJ.

Joanne on the other hand encountered more difficulties on the social level than she did academically:

> *...en parlant avec des amis c'était là où j'avais de la difficulté et j'n'avais pas les mots ou ..ça me prenait un peu plus longtemps pour..m'exprimer...*
>
> *...in speaking with my friends it was there that I had some difficulty or..it took me longer to...express myself...*

Louise also felt that academically she did well enough but that her inability to use more sophisticated social language was a serious problem that should have been seen in the French immersion program:

> *Je pense qu'il y a une manque là parce que comme moi je ne pouvais même pas en entrant dans la Faculté.. je ne savais pas comment avoir une conversation avec quelqu'un comme a..comme ici ça c'est une conversation...je ne savais pas les mots pour ça parce que ..je savais okay les mathématiques un plus un c'est deux..en Sciences je pouvais dire toutes les parties de de la corps ou en Biologie ou quelque chose comme ca ..mais je ne savais pas comment dire um..j'suis trop fatiguée parce que uh..whatever ...*
>
> *I think there was a laek there (French immersion schooling) because like me I couldn't even when I entered the Faculté...at the Faculté...I didn't even know how to have a conversation with someone like that...like here this is a conversation...I didn't know the words to do this because...okay I knew Mathematics...one plus one is two...in Sciences I could say all the*

parts of the body..in Biology or something like that...but I didn't know how to say...I'm too tired because...whatever...

Not having the ability to use the French language in social situations had major consequences on these students' abilities to find a place for themselves in the new community. As previously stated, all human beings have an innate desire to belong to the communities in which they find themselves. Not being able to speak well in social situations prevents students from creating deep relationships [what Lugones refers to as *human bonding*] with the Francophones who make up the community of affinity at CSJ. The inability to form relationships with these more proficient speakers does not mean that the immersion students stay 'unbonded,' rather, because they do not feel adequate expressing themselves in French with those who make up the new community of affinity, many French immersion students will seek out each other [other Anglophones] and as on the former French immersion landscape, and will conduct these friendships in English. This points directly to the reason so much English is heard at the Campus Saint-Jean today – French immersion students arrive in this Francophone community not able to speak French in social situations and as result they are unable to enter into relationships with the more proficient speakers who are at the core of the CSJ community of affinity. Not wanting to find themselves alone and relation-less, the French immersion students naturally gravitate to each other and form friendships using the only social language they have - English.

2. Speaking English is a Normative Transgression on the New Landscape

Choosing to speak English in order to form friendships rather than trying to speak in French and taking the chance of finding themselves 'friendless,' many French

immersion students simply begin to reproduce their previous community of affinity on the new landscape. As indicated above however, a basic agreed upon norm at the Campus Saint-Jean is that all people on this landscape will speak in French at all times. The fact that French immersion students do not feel able to do so, especially in social situations, puts them in the unfortunate position of violating what is perhaps the most important norm at CSJ – that of always speaking in French. This violation is then perceived by many Francophones (myself included - at least before I began this study) as an arrogant and intentional defiance of the normative expectations of the community.

My participant, Tammy, spoke to this very thing when she said:

je trouve que les gens disent toujours ça..l'administration..les étudiants...parce qu'on parle pas assez en français...mais comment est-ce qu'on peut ?...Ils ont l'idée que c'est une mentalité que je veux pas parler en français à la FAC...c'est pas la FAC...c'est pas la chose...oh j'suis à la Fac je dois parler en français...c'est plutôt j'suis avec mes amis et on se parle en Anglais.

I find that people always say this...the administration (at CSJ)...the students (Francophones)...because we don't speak enough in French...But how can we? They have the idea that it's a mentality thing..that I don't want to speak French at the Fac...It's not the Fac...that's not the thing. Oh, like I'm at the Fac so I have to speak in French...it's more like I'm with my friends and we speak English.

Even though French immersion students realize that they should and are expected to speak in French at CSJ, many times they feel ill equipped to do so. Tammy again commented on this:

> *...comme ché que je fais tellement d'erreurs..pis je sais..comme j't'entrain de faire les erreurs de genre mais ché pas comment les corrigé pour la plupart je vais demander...comme je vais ...comme je pose des questions 'est-ce que c'est 'le' 'la' ? Mais là quand tu es dans une conversation.. arrêter à chaque 5 secondes parce que moi j'fais une erreur ..pis là c'est une conversation de 5 minutes ça va prendre une heure parce que j'ai tellement de règles que je dois apprendre ...mais...yeah !*
>
> *...like I know that I make so many mistakes..like I know..like I'm making gender errors but I don't know how to correct them...for the most part I'll ask...like I'll ask questions "is it 'le' 'la'?" But when you're in a conversation...stopping every 5 seconds because I'm making a mistake and it's a five minute conversation it'll take an hour because I have so many rules that I have to learn.*

At the institutional level, the French immersion students' frustration and lack of knowing what to do to help themselves is not always understood. Like most English language university settings, it is often assumed that students arrive at the post-secondary level having already learned language. At this level, most courses do not teach language per se, unless they are very specifically grammar courses or beginning level Second Language courses that students might take in a department of Romance Languages. As such, it is assumed that students who do not have adequate language skills will either take

some form of remediation, drop out, or fail. Historically, as noted in Chapter Two, the CSJ considers itself an institution for native French language speakers, therefore the same assumption of proficiency exists. Although I remember writing a French entrance exam when I applied to the Faculté Saint-Jean, I never felt that I was taking courses to *learn* French since I was already proficient in the language. Rather, I was expected to read, write and think in French in the same way that I would if I were studying in an English speaking university.

Because of the change in its student population, with so many students arriving from French immersion and other second language programs, the issue of French language proficiency is a tricky one at CSJ. While students must take the same entrance exam that I did, the courses they enroll in are not necessarily geared to second language learners. Services such as those offered by the CCOE (Centre de Communication Orale et Écrite) where students can go for help with both their written and oral French, have been important in providing them with strategies to improve their skills. Increasingly, the institution is actively trying to find ways of assisting students who do not necessarily enter the institution with pre-requisite skills. Although these adjustments are important, it may be even more important to understand the actual intentions behind many second language students' tendency to speak in English to each other. The only way this understanding can develop is by engaging the students in authentic dialogue and by testing our assumptions of why they may be acting as they do, against their lived reality.

3. The Triggering of Old Storylines

When the Francophones (professors, administrators, other Francophone students) at CSJ perceive the actions of French immersion students as a blatant disregard for the

normative value of speaking French at CSJ, this tends to trigger the historical 'protectionist' storyline of Francophones vs Anglophones. The students from the immersion community of affinity are usually unaware of the French Canadians' shared hi(stories). And they do not understand the full reason for the judgmental reactions of many on this landscape when they are heard speaking English to each other. Also I believe that because speaking in French was not enforced in the French immersion program, students interpret the admonition to speak in French at CSJ in the same way – they do not take it seriously. Neither do they understand the broad consequences of speaking in English in this new context.

On the other hand, when Francophones hear so much English being spoken at CSJ their shared historical storyline of finding themselves invaded by the Anglophones is easily triggered. It is easy to assume that students who speak English at Saint-Jean are doing so on purpose – a little like thumbing their noses at the Francophones. Our fear of being assimilated into the English majority generates mistrust and suspicion in regards to the intentions of the French immersion students. The immersion students sense that they are being judged by the Francophones although they may not be exactly sure why. This type of situation, Buber called "mismeeting" (Friedman, 1983).

Tammy spoke to me of going to informal gatherings led by the French facilitator at CSJ where students came together to discuss issues they felt were important. In her recounting of the events, Tammy was angered by the Francophone students' request that students speak more French,

> *Là c'était intéressant parce que les Francophones disaient, « Ché pas pourquoi on peut pas parler Français plus ? » Yeah c'était les*

Francophones...Yeah tu parles même pas Anglais ! Alors pour vous autres c'est même pas une question parce que c'est votre langue..la seule..pour nous autres cependant..notre langue c'est en Anglais..pis uh..pour la plupart des gens c'est encore..ici à la Fac c'est juste suis français par éducation mais j'suis anglais..j'suis anglophone...

Now that's interesting because the Francophones said, "I don't know why we can't just speak more French here (at CSJ)?" Yeah this was the Francophones. Yeah you can't even speak English! So for you guys it's not even a question because it's your language...the only one...for us though English is our language..and uh..and for most people it still is today...here at the Fac it's just ...I'm only French by education but I'm an Anglophone!

Although Tammy was quite vehement with me, she did not share her views with others present at these gatherings.

Louise also spoke to me of this awareness when she noted:

Je faisais partie de l'Association Universitaire des étudiants Francophones à la Faculté Saint-Jean (AUFSJ) dans ma deuxième année. On avait toujours des plaintes des élèves que le niveau de français commence à diminuer à la Faculté. Si je vois Rachel dans le couloir, je vais dire ça, ça, et ça (en Anglais). Et si elle dit ça, je vais dire... Parce qu'on ne voulait pas faire des erreurs. C'est pour ça que je pense qu'on se sent à part. Tout le monde qui était anglophone savait. C'est nous. On

sait ça. Ce n'est pas assez évident que ça ne devrait pas être eux. Ce n'est pas explicite. Il y a beaucoup plus d'anglais dans les couloirs.

I was part of the Association of University Francophone students at the Faculté Saint-Jean (AUFSJ) in my second year. We always had complaints from the students that the level of French was diminishing at la Faculté. If I see Rachel in the hallway, I'll say this and this and this (in English). And if she says this, I'll say that...Because we don't want to make mistakes. That's why I think we feel set apart. Everyone that is an Anglophone knows. It's us. We know that. It's pretty obvious it's not them (Francophones). It's just not explicit. There is a lot of English in the hallways.

This example is highly illustrative of the gulf that exists between the two groups as they try to negotiate what they feel is important to each of them on this landscape. The lack of a common social language; the transgression of normative expectations; the inability to bond with those unlike oneself and the lack of understanding of each other's different histories has created a situation that is not easily reconcilable at CSJ. For the moment, there is a sense that both groups stand in their respective corners – both sides make certain assumptions about the other without necessarily checking to see if these assumptions are valid or not. The danger in not finding ways to come together is that inadvertently the French immersion students may begin to recreate a form of their previous community of affinity (like the one they knew in their French immersion school). Figure 6 shows the two communities of affinity when they are not well

integrated. Because the French immersion students make up such a large part of the total student population at CSJ, it is quite possible that this re-creation could happen.

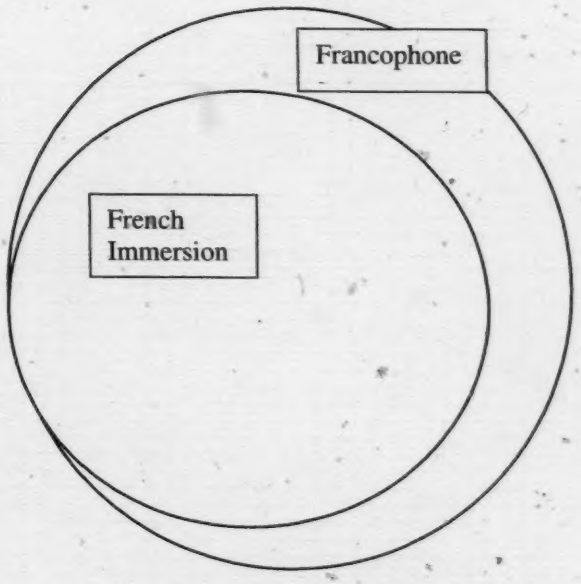

Figure 6

Mis-meeting

Sociologist Erving Goffman's (1963) study of 'stigma' sheds light on how families, groups and even local neighbourhoods, can help create a protective capsule around the young or those who are somehow different from the 'norm' (in this case, imagine students that have been in a French immersion context for 12 or 13 years and who are not, strictly speaking, 'Anglophones' but neither are they 'Francophones'). French immersion students who choose to live in French after grade 12 can only do so by moving into the larger community, either by attending CSJ, or traveling to a French speaking country or province. Those students who choose to attend CSJ, leave the

protective capsule of the French immersion school (where they were accepted for how they spoke, felt at ease with the norms, had friends and shared common histories). When they enter into a larger French world (institution, province or country) they 'stand out' because they don't speak in a 'normal way' (as understood by the native French speakers). These students may also act differently and know different things than those in this larger world and therefore may be easily 'stigmatized' by the French population.

In the case of French immersion students who come to CSJ, this situation, "may be eased somewhat by identification with the group of those similarly stigmatized [other second language learners with inadequate French language]" (Goffman, 1963, p.112). Those who fit into the world at CSJ [native French speakers], may claim to be the 'normal ones,' at least from the point of view of those feeling 'stigmatized'. At times, the 'normal ones' may offer the stigmatized students a token acceptance [a certain tolerance] in return for a 'good adjustment' [as in adhering to the norm of speaking French]. Goffman (1963) writes that this only:

> relieves the normals of ever being presented with the unfairness and pain of having to carry a stigma. They do not have to admit to themselves how limited their tactfulness and tolerance is, and they remain relatively uncontaminated by intimate contact with the stigmatized. The stigmatized person, for his part, must keep himself at such a distance from the normals as to confirm their illusions about themselves [in groups speaking English]. The best he can do is to act so as to imply neither that his burden is heavy nor that bearing it has made him different from the normals. He must not embarrass the normals by testing the limits of their pseudo full

> acceptance of him…The group [Francophones in this case] explains [not necessarily in words] to someone who differs with him or her that the other [French immersion student] is really not a member of the group because he or she does not fit the general stamp [common language, norms, people, histories], then that person will not only have been read out of the group, but out of existence itself. (p.155)

Of course the second group does not actually disappear – although some French immersion students do give up and drop out – but rather what Goffman (1963) means, is that the first group attempts to simply ignore the second group's existence or reality. Not having any choice, the second group tries to bind together and live alongside the first in a kind of uneasy pseudo-existence. Needless to say, this situation is not a healthy one for either group. On the one hand, trying to avoid noticing such a large group (especially with all the English they speak) is impossible. And on the other hand, it is no wonder that feeling cast aside, the French immersion students feel forced to recreate the only community they have ever known: the French immersion community, which naturally uses English, their first language. This does, in fact, put the whole institution at risk of losing its Francophone essence – not simply because second language students are speaking English but because there has been little effort to understand why they feel the need to do so. This type of mismeeting and misreading of the others' intentions often degenerates into what Friedman calls 'existential mistrust' which can quickly become reciprocal. Friedman (1983) explains:

> If we reflect suspicion on someone else, it is reflected back on us until we find the very evidence we are looking for: the other also mistrusts us and

> acts in ways to confirm our worst fears about him. The typical behavior of large groups and societies in relation to one another is exactly what we would call paranoid if we encountered it in individuals. Each group has a shut in, closed world, sealed off from seeing in the way that the other sees. Each interprets the motives of the other in terms of its own world of defenses, fears, and suspicions. (p.22)

Many French immersion students who suffered the shock of discovering that they were nowhere near as competent in French as they believed themselves to be, have felt a sense of shame as they tried to enter into relationship with the more proficient Francophone speakers. One consequence of this is that these students, who so badly need to enter into informal and social conversations with those more proficient than themselves, have no way of doing so in the present situation (this is not the case for all French Immersion students as will be shown further on.)

The only healthy way out of this situation is for there to be true dialogue between the two groups. Not only could this dialogue correct any false assumptions that the students have about each other but it would allow the French immersion students to engage and practice the social language they so badly need to practice. In a case of such existential mistrust, CSJ must find ways of creating a climate of trust where both groups can begin a dialogue in order to discover the other's true situation and motivations.

Seeing With New Eyes

Considering the construction of both communities, there are likely many false assumptions and perceptions held by both groups which keep them from truly

understanding each other. Buber (1967) feels that such a situation can only be eased by the opening of an 'authentic dialogue' or the oral-aural experience between the two groups. When separate communities of affinity find themselves staring at each other across a great distance, they are unable to meet in Buber's important 'sphere of the between,' where through dialogue each might "throw a bridge from self-being across the abyss…where one person reaches out beyond that special sphere of the between that reaches out beyond the sphere of each" (Friedman, 1983, p.4). In the next chapter I will discuss Friedman's *community of otherness* as a possible alternative to the *community of affinity* model for CSJ.

CHAPTER EIGHT - FINDINGS

"Moving Past Assumptions"

Introduction

In this chapter, I travel up the hermeneutic spiral into the theoretical framework of the study in order to present Friedman's Buberian notion of a 'community of otherness' as a possible alternative to the community of affinity at the Campus Saint-Jean. It is important to note here that the community of otherness is not an ideal but rather it is, "a direction in which we are trying to move, a reality we are trying to build in every situation in which we find ourselves" (Friedman, 1983, p.162). Therefore, the community of otherness must not be understood as an ideal model to be imposed on the CSJ. Not only is it not a model but it is also not an attitude that can be imposed onto others. I revisit the assumptions that I held (see Chapter Four) about the French immersion students at CSJ, knowing full well that many other Francophones on this landscape share many of these same assumptions. Through the dialogical process my participants and I engaged in, I developed new understandings and shifted my attitudes toward the French immersion population. It is my hope that in sharing these, others might see themselves in 'me' so that they too can begin to open themselves to a better understanding of the situation.

Creating the 'Between'

The situation at CSJ is not an unusual one. Whenever different groups of people attempt to co-exist within the same physical space there is always the very real possibility of mis-meeting or in the case of countries, of one trying to overthrow the other. Buber

spoke of this tendency in 1952 at his farewell celebration in New York City when he said that "The abysses between man and man threaten ever more pitilessly to become unbridgeable." He saw that:

> genuine dialogue between persons of different kinds and convictions is becoming ever more difficult and rare…this inability to carry on a genuine dialogue from one camp to the other is the severest symptom of that existential mistrust which is the sickness of present-day man, and this in turn stems from the inner poisoning of the total human organism by the destruction of trust in human existence. (Friedman, 1991, p.409)

As stated in the theoretical framework of this study, Buber along with Friedman believed that it is through an act of confirmation, which he explained as "the confirming of one person by another through the first person's making the other present, *meaning* him or her in his or her uniqueness, and including the other's inmost self-becoming," that communities of *affinity* can be transformed into communities of *otherness* (Friedman 1983, p.xii). This is done by opening a space for true dialogue to emerge between the two groups, "not just in the sense that you may say your piece and I will say my piece, but in the sense that we grow together even in opposing each other, even in conflict, because we really are coming up against each other" (p.162). In fact, Friedman believes that "one of the reasons that we have communities of affinity or of like-mindedness is that we are afraid of difference, of conflict" (p.160). In turning towards the other in dialogue we enter the space of 'the between' and create a community of otherness. As illustrated in Figure 7, the community of otherness is always held in tension with the other in the space between the two.

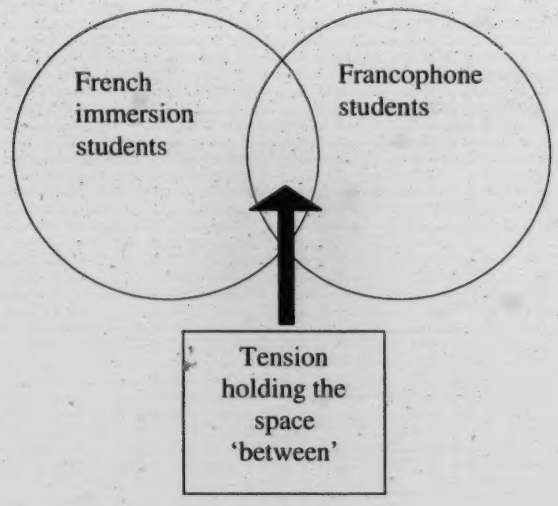

Figure 7

The Emergence of the Community of Otherness

Moving Past Assumptions to Discover the 'Other'

Opening up a space for true dialogue allows a testing of the assumptions that we hold about those who are different from us. When I first returned to Campus Saint-Jean to teach and I saw how it had changed from being a mostly French speaking community to one where much English was used, my first inclination was to judge harshly those who were speaking English. I felt they were deliberately transgressing the norms of the institution by not speaking in French and I was angered by this. I remember making certain well intentioned comments to students in the courses I taught about the importance of speaking French when they were at CSJ. I was usually met either with anger or silent glares from many of these students. I realize today that this was because

many students felt they were making all the effort they could in response to a very challenging situation. I admit that I did not understand the level of difficulty they were facing in this new context. Because many of the students were silent or angry, I did not see beyond their behaviours into the underlying struggle they were experiencing. This is often what happens when a whole group is lumped into one category as in "all French immersion students are…," and then judged as a 'category' rather than reaching out to 'meet' the individuals who make up the category. As Goffman (1963) says, the individual "is not a type or a category, but a human being" (p.115). Categorizing and laying my assumptions upon the French immersion students prevented me from gaining any understanding of the uniqueness of them since they were simply the "detached object[s] of my observation" (Friedman, 1992, p.60). By entering into true dialogue with the participants in this study, I have continuously sought to "perceive the dynamic center that stamps [them]…[in their] unique utterances, actions and attitudes; the recognizable sign[s] of uniqueness" (p.60).

Unraveling Assumptions in the Space 'Between'

Once I was able to enter into dialogue with my participants and hold the tension in the space 'between,' I began the process of checking the assumptions that I held about them as individuals standing in front of me, rather than the category into which I had previously placed them. In this section, I will look at how my own assumptions have been transformed as a result of entering into dialogue and truly listening to my participants' lived experiences at CSJ. Here I will play the role of 'bridge' in helping my participants' voices reach the other side of Buber's 'abyss'. Hearing their voices has changed my perceptions radically, for now I am beginning to understand their struggle

and I stand in awe of what they are attempting to accomplish. I have in this sense transcended my previous assumptions by meeting my participants in the middle – they are not who I thought they were and I hope that I am not who they may have thought I was. While I am well aware that the findings of this study cannot be generalized to the whole French immersion student population at CSJ, I believe they can help those at CSJ gain some new understandings of the possible lived experiences of some French immersion students there. Since this is the first study of its kind to be done at CSJ, its aims are naturally modest. It is my hope that it will incite other researchers to expand upon this research in the near future.

My 1st assumption:

French immersion students come to the Department of Education at CSJ because they know they will get a job when they graduate.

There is a 'floating' assumption that the students who speak French as a second language come to CSJ because there are many jobs for French immersion and Second Language teachers in Alberta at the present time. This belief coincides nicely with the studies (see Chapter Two) that show that many parents enroll their children in French immersion programs in order to give them an advantage on the job market later on. Of course, this is not to say that some students do not come for this reason but I no longer believe that this is the only reason or even the main reason for them attending CSJ. It is true that at the moment there is a need for teachers in both the French immersion and French Second Language programs in Alberta and British Columbia. But now that I am aware of how hard the students must work in order to get through the program, I do not believe that many of them would put themselves through these struggles simply to get a

job. I have found that for the most part students attend CSJ because they want to be French teachers. After conducting this study, I can say that the French immersion students I have encountered are highly motivated, courageous and tenacious people who are to be admired for their ambitions. Rather than attending CSJ as a means to an end, their reasons for becoming French teachers are grounded in a deep commitment to *becoming* a part of the teaching profession; in *being* teachers – a decision that was not made for superficial or simplistic reasons.

An example of this commitment is reflected in Louise' comment:

> *Je savais depuis que j'avais sept ans que je voulais enseigner..je ne savais pas si je voulais enseigner en français ou en anglais mais..en dixième je pense j'ai pris la décision qu'on a vraiment besoin des autres professeurs en immersion parce que ...quelques uns que j'ai eu..j'ai dit okay ...y'a des problèmes ici et je voulais ..comme je voulais être l'enseignant qu'ils n'étaient pas.*
>
> *I knew since I was seven years old that I wanted to teach..I didn't know if I wanted to teach in French or in English but..in grade ten, I think I made the decision that we really needed other teachers in immersion because...some of the ones that I had..I said, "Okay there's problems here" and I wanted ...like I wanted to be the teacher that they weren't.*

Tammy also spoke to this moment of realization when she said:

> *Quand moi j'étais en première année ah..j'étais sous la science et puis ça c'était en janvier puis j'tais comme, « Ah, je veux vraiment aller en*

éducation »..C'est ça que je voulais vraiment faire puis là j'ai décidé de venir en éducation.

When I was in my first year ah..I was in Sciences and it was January and I was like, "Ah I really want to be in education." I decided that I really wanted to do this and I decided to come into education.

As well as showing a commitment to the teaching profession, Joanne also showed the desire to teach *in* French:

Quand j'ai commencé je voulais juste prendre des..des cours en français et puis j'les ai bien aimés et j'ai décidé de continuer. J'avais un bon temps... je trouvais que c'était un défi et c'était intéressant et c'était quelque chose que je voulais continuer à utiliser. J'ai fait tout ce travail pour avoir le français alors j'ai pensé bien je devrais l'utiliser et j'aimerais bien.. enseigner en immersion.

When I began I just wanted to take some courses in French and I really liked them and so I decided to continue. I had a good time...I found that it was a challenge and it was interesting and it was something I wanted to continue to use. I did all this work to have French so I thought I should use it and I would really like to teach in immersion.

My 2nd assumption:

French immersion students are not committed to the French language.

Assuming that French immersion students were not committed to the French language was perhaps one of my biggest mistakes. After interviewing my participants and having spoken at great length about these issues in the courses that I teach, I have found myself greatly humbled by the efforts that so many of these students make to overcome the obstacles they encounter as they study to become second language teachers. As I have often told them, I don't believe that I would have the same commitment and motivation in learning French if I had not learned it as a young child.

Participants expressed their commitment in different ways. Joanne committed herself to the French language by extending her French experience outside of CSJ and into the greater Francophone community by participating in the French Choir *La Chorale Saint-Jean.* As she explained:

> *Presque tout le monde dans la chorale est Francophone et la langue maternelle est le français y'a pas vraiment beaucoup d'étudiants anglophones...la plupart..sont des personnes plus âgées et um..c'est intéressant parce que ..on parle en français et c'est ça me donne l'occasion de parler en français dans un contexte différent que l'école parce que ..on parle de choses différentes avec des personnes qui sont plus vieux alors ..j'apprends beaucoup comme les mots de la musique..le voçabulaire musical que je ne connaissais pas en français avant parce que..je suis très impliquée dans la musique chez moi mais c'était tout en anglais.*
>
> *Almost everyone in the choir is Francophone and their first language is French ..there aren't many Anglophone students..most are older people*

and ..um it's interesting because we speak French and it gives me the chance to speak in French in a different context..different from school because we talk about different things with people that are older so I learn a lot like the words of music, the musical vocabulary that I didn't know in French because I was very implicated in music back home but it was all in English.

Joanne's decision to participate in the larger Francophone community was not taken on a whim:

...y'a une audition et je savais avant que je suis venue qu'il y avait une chorale et puis j'voulais chanter parce que je voulais m'impliquer dans la musique premièrement et puis je voulais le faire en français bien sur alors um..mais je ne pouvais pas me joindre à la chorale en septembre parce que j'avais un cours les soirs alors j'ai fait une audition et je me suis joint à la chorale en janvier...

There were auditions and I knew there was a choir before I came here... that there was a choir and I wanted to sing because I wanted to participate in music firstly and I wanted to do it in French of course... so...but I couldn't join in September because I was taking an evening class so I auditioned and joined the choir in January.

Joanne was excited that belonging to the choir would allow her to travel to the province of Quebec for the first time where she would have the chance to practice her French skills more extensively:

...et on va au Québec cet été en tournée oui pour deux semaines...Et j'pense qu'en parlant juste avec les mêmes personnes en français, qui sont dans la chorale pendant deux semaines dans ce contexte là va être super ...Oui...on va pouvoir magasiner et manger tout ça en français...

...and we're going to tour Quebec this summer for two weeks...And I think that by speaking in French with the same people for two weeks in that context will be great...Yes, we'll be able to shop and eat ...all in French...

I interviewed Joanne shortly after she got back from her trip to Québec and she told me:

C'était intéressant parce qu'ils (les Québécois) ne savaient pas combien ils étaient chanceux d'être dans une communauté qui était…qui vivait en français. Je me sentais chanceuse d'être là. De pouvoir parler en français, avoir toute cette expérience complètement en français. Ils ne savaient pas vraiment combien ils étaient chanceux. Ils étaient vraiment surpris de voir qu'avec nous c'est toujours un peu, pas vraiment une bataille, mais un défi de vivre en français dans une communauté anglophone. Je me sentais chanceuse d'être là. De pouvoir être avec ce monde qui voulait nous encourager, qui pensait que notre musique était superbe aussi. Ils aimaient vraiment ça. Il y avait beaucoup d'ovations et beaucoup d'attention des médias…les entrevues et tout ça. C'était superbe d'être acceptée non seulement par les québécois mais par la communauté de la chorale parce que la plupart de la chorale est Francophone. J'ai appris en tournée qu'il y a seulement sept membres de la chorale d'environ 50-60 membres qui sont francophiles. Je suis dans la minorité et je me sentais encore chanceuse et privilégiée de faire partie de cette communauté aussi. Ils étaient tellement chaleureux et gentils.

It was interesting because they (the Quebecois) didn't know how lucky they were to be in the community where they lived in French. I felt lucky to be there. To be able to speak in French, to have this whole experience all in French. They really didn't know how lucky they were. They were very surprised to see that for us that it's always like..not really a fight..but a challenge to live in French in an English community. I felt lucky to be there. To be with these people that wanted to encourage us, that thought that our music was superb too. They really liked it. We got many ovations and lots of attention from the media..interviews and all that. It was great to be accepted not only by the Quebecois but by the choir community because most are Francophone. I learned on tour that there are only 7 members out of 50 or 60 members that are Francophiles. I am in the minority and I felt lucky and privileged to be part of this community too. They were so warm and friendly.

When I listened to Joanne speak, I saw and felt her excitement and motivation to live this type of larger experience in French. But I also felt her happiness at being able to belong to this group of Francophones, as one of them, as someone of value. Because of this experience, she now seeks ways to be part of the culture of the community:

La prochaine étape c'est l'immersion culturelle. Pour moi, entrant à la Fac c'était vraiment une expérience. J'ai pris la langue que j'avais appris en immersion et j'ai appris un peu plus à propos de la culture. Il y a des événements communautaires juste à l'école qu'on peut faire. On peut s'impliquer dans ces choses pour avoir plus une expérience en

français et la vie en français. Alors, j'ai décidé de vivre en français parce qu'en immersion pendant mon expérience universitaire, à l'université anglophone, j'avais pas cette expérience.

The next step is cultural immersion. For me, coming to the Fac was really an experience. I took the language that I had learned in immersion and I learned a little more about the [Francophone] culture. There are community events right here at school (CSJ) that we can participate in. We can involve ourselves in these things to gain more experience in French and to life in French. So I decided to live in French because in immersion and during my experience at my previous Anglophone university I didn't have this experience.

It is important to note here that of all three participants in this study, Joanne was the most at-ease in the French language and therefore less intimidated when speaking French. She constantly showed by her comments how committed she was to the French language even if she wasn't perfect:

À un certain point, je devais décider et dire « Je veux aller à la Faculté. Je veux poursuivre cette éducation en français. » Ce sont des racines quotidiennes. Je vis chaque jour en français à l'école et je veux créer une vie en français.

At a certain point, I had to decide and say, "I want to go to the Faculté. I want to pursue this education in French." They are daily roots. I live every day in French at school and I want to create a life in French.

Tammy expressed her commitment to the French language somewhat differently. She spoke of participating in the six week French program in Québec as a first step:

> *C'était plus la vie sociale à Trois-Rivières ..c'était juste des conversations entre élèves avec l'enseignant puis l'enseignant y'essayait ...il nous laissait faire n'importe quoi puis moi j'tais comme...j'aime ça j'aime la classe ici.*
>
> *It was more about the social life in Trois-Rivières..it was just conversations between the students with the teacher and the teacher tried...he let us do what we wanted and I was like, I like this, I like this class here.*

Tammy went on to admit that it is difficult to find ways in which to participate in French in an English speaking city like Edmonton. But in spite of this, she has managed to find work in an area where there are many Francophone families with whom she can communicate:

> *...y'a pas beaucoup d'une vie Francophone en ville...c'est pour ça que j'aime travailler dans le cartier Francophone...pis il y a plusieurs familles Francophones pis j'ai la chance de pratiquer un peu...les parents entre eux... ils parlent en français et moi j'aime ça et j'peux l'entendre je sais ce qu'ils dit et même l'entendre des fois ça m'aide...comme j'aime ça et j'lai parlé c'est en français..pis eux-autres dit « Tu peux parler les deux langues ! »*

...there's not a lot of a Francophone life here in town...that's why I like working in a Francophone neighbourhood...there's quite a few Francophone families and I have the chance to practice some..the parents between themselves...they speak in French and I like that and I can hear French ..I know what they're saying and sometimes just hearing it helps me...like I like it and when I speak to them in French they say, "You can speak both languages!"

For Louise, the situation is again a little different. In order to expand her linguistic community, she chose to raise her son in French:

J'ai mon fils maintenant et nous parlons en français avec lui à la maison pour qu'il um..pour qu'il apprenne le français et il assiste à la garderie Francophone et immersion .... il ne sait pas comment ne pas parlé en français...parce que pour lui c'est soit l'Anglais soit Français ou uh..les deux dépendamment de qu'est-ce qu'il veut dire parce qu'il y a des mots qu'il n'a jamais utilisés en Anglais alors il ne sait pas le mot ..

Il commence à parler et il sait surtout quand il <u>me</u> parle que n'importe qu'est-ce qu'il va dire moi je peux comprendre ..um il a deux ans maintenant presque trois .. alors il comprend maintenant que y a quelques personnes qui peut parler en français y'a des autres qui ne peut pas ..il est très bon à la traduction s'il voit que tu ne comprends pas il répète en français puis il répète en Anglais pour que la prochaine fois quand il le dit en français tu peux savoir tout de suite c'est ça qu'il veut alors...

I have my son now and we speak with him in French so that he can learn French and he is at a Francophone and immersion daycare…he doesn't know how not to speak French…because for him it's either English or French or uh..both depending on what he wants to say because there are words that he has never used in English and he doesn't know the words…he starts to talk and he knows especially that in talking with me that anything he says I will understand…Um he's two now..almost three..so he understands now that there are some people who can speak French and others that don't…he's very good at translating if he sees that someone doesn't understand..he repeats in French and he repeats in English so that the next time he says it the person will know what he wants…

Although this sounds wonderful, in reality she admits that as a second language learner, living alongside her son in his Francophone daycare has not always been easy:

…moi j'trouvais même quand il a commencé à la garderie…uh..c'est lui qui m'a poussé a m'amélioré la langue parce que quand j'ai commencé cet janvier j'étais assez um…je ne sais pas le mot…'rusty ?' Mais il commence tout de suite en français et c'était immersé pendant toute la journée et parce qu'il était jeune il a dit…« c'est comme donne moi la langue! Je vais complètement comprendre, » et il a commencé à dire des choses et j'avais aucune idée qu'est-ce qu'il était entrain de me dire …j'avais un idée mais c'était pas très claire ..et il était tellement frustré avec moi que j'ai dû dire 'Okay [tappe des mains] Mom step it up here

[tappe des mains] (rire).. alors…j'ai juste utilisé le dictionnaire ou si c'est les mots comme 'toutou' je ne savais pas le mot 'toutou' parce que...uh...en immersion français on a pas besoin… parce que d'habitude à cinq ans on a plus des toutous et si on a des toutous on n'apporte pas à l'école alors le mot est jamais utilisé alors c'était des mots comme ça que je ne savais pas parce que c'est vraiment idiomatique à la langue des personnes qui sont Francophones…les Francophones vont utiliser ces mots...moi je ne vais pas..alors j'ai demandé à la dame de la garderie ...Qu'est-ce qu'il dit, je ne comprends pas ce mot là..et elle a dit, « Oh, c'est...l'ourson qu'il a » et je oh okay ça c'est facile.. et les petits..les choses comme ça et je peux même pas m'en souvenir maintenant ...c'est quel mot que j'avais des difficultés parce que maintenant je les utilise tout le temps avec lui…mais c'était les mots comme ça...je savais comment parler le Français...dans une institution mais je ne savais pas comment parler avec un enfant de deux ans et de parler des choses qui sont importants pour lui parce que je n'avais pas le vocabulaire pour parler avec lui.

I found that even when he started at the daycare...um...it was him that pushed me to improve my French because um when I started back to school in January I was a little...how do you say…rusty? But he started right away in French…he was immersed in it all day long and because he was young…it was like "Give me the language! I'll totally understand," and he started saying things and I had no idea what he was saying...well I

had an idea but it wasn't clear and he was so frustrated with me and so I had to say, "Okay" (claps hands) step it up here! (laughs)...so I just used the dictionary or if it was words like 'toutou' (teddy)...and I didn't know the word 'toutou' because in French immersion we don't need...because usually by the time we're five we no longer have teddy bears and if we do have them we don't usually bring them to school so the word is never used...so it was words like that, that I didn't know because it's very idiomatic to the people that are Francophones...the Francophones will use these words...I won't...so I asked the lady at the daycare. "What is he saying? I don't understand that word." And she said, "Oh, it's the teddy bear that he has." And I said, "Okay that's easy!"...And little things like that...I can't even remember all of them now...which words I had trouble with because now I use them all the time with him...but it was words like that...I knew how to speak French...in an institution but I did not know how to speak to a two year old child and to talk about things that were important to him because I didn't have the vocabulary to talk with him.

Louise showed her true commitment to the French language when she added:

Pour moi, je pense que si tu es une personne anglophone qui inscrit ses enfants dans un programme d'immersion parce que tu veux qu'ils aient des occasions plus tard. Si tu as fait cette décision pour ton enfant, va plus loin. Va chercher. Ici à Edmonton, il y a une communauté Francophone. Pour les vacances d'été, au lieu de faire du camping à Colombie Britannique, va au nord de l'Alberta. Il y en a de belles places

et des communautés très Francophones. Tu peux essayer. Tu peux demander à ton enfant « Peux-tu commander des choses en français ? » en comprenant que peut-être que ça ne va pas marcher. Mais, au moins tu as fait l'effort. En plus, ça fait deux choses : 1) Ça leur donne l'occasion d'utiliser la langue française qu'ils sont en train d'apprendre et 2) Ça renforce l'idée que c'est très important pour maman et papa que j'apprends cette langue. Je veux travailler fort pour que l'été prochain quand maman me demande cette chose, je vais être capable. Je ne vais pas être embarrassé. Toute suite, il y a des choses qui sont différentes. Cet été, je veux aller à Montréal et mon fils va voir qu'il y a quelque chose d'autre que les mathématiques et les sciences en français. Il y a des autres choses comme commander un hamburger ou des pommes frites ou poutine. Moi, je n'aime pas la poutine mais je vais en manger juste pour l'expérience !

For me I think that if you are an Anglophone person that puts their child in the French immersion program because you want him or her to have greater advantages later on...if you made this decision for your child, then go further. Go look. Here in Edmonton, there's a Francophone community. During summer holidays, instead of going camping in British Columbia, go to Northern Alberta. There are beautiful places and communities that are very Francophone there...You can try. You can ask your child, "Can you order things in French?" understanding that this might not work. But at least you have made the effort. On top of it, it will

do two things: 1) It gives them the chance to use the French language that they are in the midst of learning and 2) It reinforces the idea that it is important to Mom and Dad that they are learning this language. The child will then say to himself, "I want to work hard so that next summer when Mom asks me to do the same thing, I'll be able to. I won't be embarrassed. And right away things will be different. This summer I want to go to Montreal and my son will see something other than Mathematics and Science in French. That there are other things like ordering a hamburger in or French fries or poutine. I don't like poutine but I'll eat it anyways just for the experience!

As a parent who has spoken to two of her children in French since birth, I know how much of a challenge this can be, and this from a Francophone living in an Anglophone community. Louise showed an incredible dedication and commitment to the French language that puts me a little to shame as a Francophone – especially since she was doing all of this for her son in her second language. Perhaps the most fascinating finding to emerge from this study was that most of the French immersion students I have spoken to expressed the desire to raise their children in French. Joanne discussed her "hoped for" children with me:

J'pense pas que j'ai pas le droit de les envoyer à une école Francophone alors j'pense que je vais les envoyer en immersion. Mais...je pense que ça va aller parce que...j'ai pense un peu à ça et si j'leur parle en français à la maison et puis ils font l'immersion à l'école je pense que ça va bien

aller...ils vont avoir un bon français social et pourront l'utiliser en famille.

I don't think I have the right to send my children (when I have them) to a Francophone school so I think I'll put them in immersion. But I think this will be fine because...I've thought a little about this and if I speak French to them at home and then they go into immersion at school I think it will go well...they'll have a good social language in French and will be able to use it in the family.

Of course one can never be sure that these students will in fact raise their children in French as Louise is doing, but it is interesting that they express the desire to do so.

My 3rd assumption:

French immersion students are aware of their linguistic abilities in French when they arrive at CSJ.

This assumption seems to be largely false. It is also appears to be the main reason why some French immersion students suffer so much when they make the transition from one community into the other.

As Louise told me:

Mais comme pour moi je ne savais pas qu'il y avait comme une différence..j'étais vraiment jeune... je ne savais pas qu'il y avait comme une différence et si les enseignants ne parlent pas des différences et ne nous disent pas d'où ils viennent ...et pourquoi ils parlent de certaines

façons ou quoique ce soit on l'apprend pas et puis um j'pense que c'est seulement si on voyage ou si on fait des amis Francophones ou quoique ce soit on va s'aperçevoir.

Like for me I didn't know that there was like a difference...I was really young I didn't know there was a difference and if the teachers don't talk about these differences and don't tell us where they come from and why they talk in certain ways or whatever...we don't learn this...and um I think that it's only if we travel or if we make Francophone friends or whatever that we will notice these differences.

Unfortunately, this lack of awareness takes many students completely by surprise when they realize that they are not as competent in the French language as they had thought they were. One of the most unfortunate things to happen to these students is that they often conflate their poor linguistic ability in French with who they are as persons. This was something that I had never considered. I was aware, of course, of their limited abilities in the French language but I somehow thought that they were quite aware and expected to encounter these difficulties on attending a post-secondary institution like CSJ; that they did know that it was not going to be easy. How they were supposed to know this, I'm not sure. I don't believe it is necessary for CSJ to make huge changes in the way it assists the French immersion students at present, but these students do want the institution to give them a little more support and guidance when they are first admitted into the program. As Louise suggested to me:

Oui, mais je peux même voir que si moi j'étais enseignante à la Faculté, je ne regarde pas ce qu'ils ont fait, je vais regarder ce qu'ils doivent faire et

qu'est-ce qu'ils peuvent faire. Mais, je pense que s'ils prennent le petit moment pour voir et réfléchir sur ce qu'ils ont déjà entendu des professeurs, ils vont voir que « peut-être je vais dire ça un petit peu différemment » parce que l'étudiant, à ce point-là, ils sont encore des adolescents. Oui, je suis d'accord qu'il faut qu'ils maturent un peu mais maturer en 30 minutes c'est difficile. Alors, juste de dire d'une façon différente comme commencer la phrase avec « Ton travail est très fort et tu es à un très bon niveau pour une personne d'immersion » Mais il faut comprendre que ce n'est pas nécessairement au même niveau que quelqu'un qui rentre d'une école Francophone. Alors, la plupart des étudiants de l'immersion vont comprendre ça parce qu'ils savent déjà ? Ils vont voir la différence. C'est juste que si tu ne le mets pas dans ce contexte que « l'école, c'est l'école. J'étais bonne dans cette école et dans cette école, je ne suis pas bonne.

Yes I can even see that if I were teaching at the Faculté, that I would not be looking at what they (French immersion students) did but I would be looking for what they have to do and what they are able to do. But I thing that if they took a small moment to look and reflect on what these students have already heard from their other professors, they would see that "maybe I should say this a little bit differently" because the student at this point, they are still adolescents. Yes I am in agreement that they must mature a little but to mature in 30 minutes, that's difficult. So just saying things in a different way like starting the sentence with, "Your work is

very strong and you're at a good level for someone from immersion...but you must understand that it's not necessarily at the same level as someone coming from a Francophone school". So most students from immersion will understand this because they already know – they'll understand the difference. It's just that if you don't place it in context that 'school is school'. I was good in this school over here but in this school I'm not as good...

She went on to say that this needn't even be said face to face, but that it does somehow need to be communicated to the students:

Il ne faut pas dire les mots nécessairement. Mais, je pense que dans la bureaucratie...Mais même dans une lettre. C'est assez facile de faire une autre phrase là comme « Congratulations but you will have to work harder » Don't even put the 'but' in there. Just, « you will have to work harder in this context because we want to put you in the next level. » C'est ça qu'ils devraient dire et c'est tout parce que c'est pas une insulte et ça veut pas dire que tout ce qu'ils ont fait ça vaut rien ...

We needn't say the words necessarily. But, I think that's it's in the bureaucracy...but even in a letter. It's easy enough to write a sentence like "Congratulations but you will have to work harder" Don't even put the 'but' in there. Just, "You will have to work harder in this context because we want to put you in the next level." That's what they should say and that's all...because it's not an insult and it doesn't mean then that everything they've done isn't worth anything...

It is interesting to note that at least in this participant's mind such a small acknowledgment from those at the CSJ would have made all the difference. I will speak to the importance of this type of small adjustment in the last section of this study.

My 4th assumption

French immersion students don't care that the Francophones want their institution to remain French

Although Louise indicated that she felt a sense of 'not belonging' when she first arrived at CSJ, she also showed a capacity to empathize with the Francophones who now find themselves in the midst of so many English speaking students:

> *Oui, c'est ça. Alors, c'est changé. C'est dommage parce qu'on parle beaucoup trop d'anglais dans les couloirs et je vais admettre que moi je suis une des personnes mais si j'entre dans une conversation en anglais, je ne peux pas juste changer. Je pense maintenant que les Francophones se sentent à part...à part des autres.*
>
> *Yes that's it. So now it's changed. It's unfortunate because we speak much too much English in the hallways and I will admit that I am one of these people but if I get into a conversation in English I can't just switch. I think now the Francophones must feel apart...apart from others...*

I came away from my conversations with Louise feeling that she was just as troubled by the amount of English spoken at CSJ as the Francophone students are. It is natural, I think, for Francophones at CSJ to assume that because the French immersion students are speaking in English, they are intentionally choosing not to speak in French. I

no longer automatically assume this to be the case. I think that many of these students would much rather be speaking in French, but they have great difficulty getting past their embarrassment and shame at their lack of skills when they are speaking to other, more competent, French speakers. I have come to believe that rather than being recalcitrant or oppositional, oftentimes these students are trapped in a vicious cycle as shown in Figure 8.

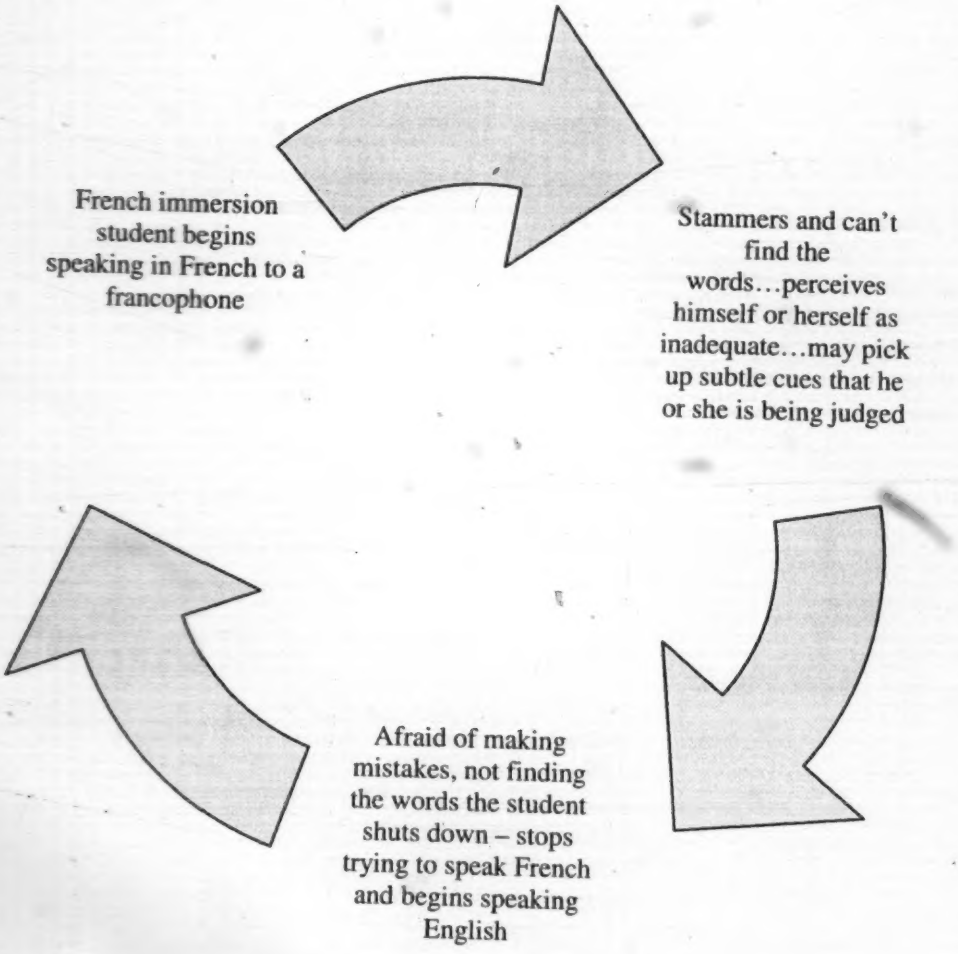
French immersion student begins speaking in French to a francophone
Stammers and can't find the words…perceives himself or herself as inadequate…may pick up subtle cues that he or she is being judged
Afraid of making mistakes, not finding the words the student shuts down – stops trying to speak French and begins speaking English

Figure 8 – The Vicious Circle of Communication

Participants spoke to me of feeling judged by some Francophones with whom they were trying to interact. At times though, this sense of judgment could be more of a misperception or what Buber calls a case of 'mis-meeting' than an actual negative intention on the part of Francophones. One example of such a situation is that it would seem (according to some second language students) that Francophone students often switch to English soon after a conversation with them begins. This type of encounter is not limited to CSJ, as many second language students have had similar experiences while traveling to either Quebec or other French speaking countries, such as France. Somewhat comically, there are those students who have said that this has even happened while speaking with Quebecois who can barely speak English. Rather than allowing the second language student to continue on in French, they will attempt to lead the conversation in their very broken English. In such a case, I can well understand why it would be perceived as an insult by the second language student, but once again, unless we check our perceptions and assumptions against the reality of the other's intentions then we may well find ourselves mistaken and misjudging the other. I understand the tendency to switch to the "language of ease" of the person we meet and from my point of view this is not an insult but a form of politeness to the other. Obviously though, this is not how it is perceived by many of the second language students. This then can become a situation where two individuals appear to be standing on different sides of Buber's 'abyss' – one that we both are responsible for creating by not engaging in *true* dialogue with each other.

In concluding discussion of this fourth assumption, I must say that what impressed me most about Louise was her ability to recognize herself as part of the problem. At no

time did she try to make excuses for her actions or those of her peers, and she was able to empathize with the Francophone students in stating that she knew they must be feeling overwhelmed and in danger of being overtaken by the English speaking students. This, to me, is an example of the kind of openness that is required in a community of otherness.

My 5th assumption

French immersion students are aware of French Canadian hi(stories) and the storylines of survival and protectionism that run through them.

None of the participants in the study showed much awareness of the lived experiences of Francophones in general or of the historical construction of the Campus Saint-Jean as a Francophone postsecondary institution.

For instance, all Joanne knew was:

> *Je sais que c'est commencé comme un collège pour les garçons, c'était commencé par des moines et, pas beaucoup plus que ça. C'était toujours un collège Francophone et puis c'est commencé à accepter les filles et puis...je sais pas. On est là aujourd'hui et c'est plus par l'église...*
>
> *I know that it started as a college for boys, it was started by monks and not much more than that. It was always a Francophone college and it started accepting girls and ...I don't know.*

She went on to say that:

On avait eu une petite introduction à l'histoire de la Faculté quand on est venu. Il y a la salle historique alors on a vu des photos, des groupes de garçons qui étaient au début.

We had a little introduction to the history of the Faculté when we came. There's a historical room where we saw pictures, groups of boys...that was in the beginning.

From these comments it is easy to see that even though the immersion students get a glimpse of the history of CSJ, it remains quite separate from their own lived histories as Anglophones. However, this does not mean that someone like Joanne is not interested or that it is impossible for her to gain a deeper understanding of the history. When asked what was important for her in connecting with Francophone students she stated:

Je pense juste les gens qui parlent de leurs familles ou de la vie à la maison en français. Ceux qui viennent du Nouveau-Brunswick ou du Québec ou des Franco-Albertains, Fransaskois. Juste des gens qui partagent leurs histoires. C'est vraiment ça qui est important. Partager des histoires et des coutumes...

I think it's the people talking about their families or their lives at home in French. Those that come from New Brunswick or Quebec or Franco-Albertans, Fransaskois. Just people sharing their stories. It's really that that's important. Sharing stories and one's customs.

When asked when this sharing happened, Joanne replied:

C'est plutôt avec des amis dans un contexte social...On parle de chez nous ou quoi que ce soit. Oui, c'est là ou on entend les histoires des autres.

It's usually with friends in a social context...We talk about where we come from. Yes, it's then that we hear the stories of others.

Not only was a social context important for Joanne in gaining knowledge of the stories and (hi)stories of the Francophones around her but she explained how extending her experiences outside CSJ into the greater Francophone community in Edmonton, where she sings in the Francophone choir, has helped her gain important insights into this history:

Je sais pour moi cette année je me sentais un peu plus lié à l'histoire de la Faculté, quand on a fait cette tournée au Québec avec la chorale et on a parlé beaucoup de la première groupe qui est allée au Québec et c'était pendant les années 40. Et il y avait des quarts de temps entre là et maintenant que personne est allé. Alors, on a parlé beaucoup de ça et que c'était un grand événement à cause de ça.

I know that for me this year I felt a little more linked to the history at the Faculté when we went on our tour in Quebec with the choir and we speak a lot of the very first choir group that ever went to Quebec and it was in the 40s. And there was a big gap between then and now where no one went there. So we spoke a lot about this and that our going there was a very big event because of this.

Louise, for her part, had a slightly more developed idea of the political storyline woven through the Francophones' history:

> *C'est nécessaire de dire. C'est important d'avoir une faculté française en Alberta. C'est important d'avoir cette communauté pour la langue française. Si on était à la Faculté, moi, en disant que l'identité et la langue ça ne va pas ensembe, ils (les Francophones) pensent à l'identité « Nous sommes des Francophones. Il y a des anglophones qui nous entourent. » ...Oui. Je pense que pour eux...et je peux dire ça...que pour eux, c'est un peu mêlé. Être une minorité fait partie de leur identité... Mais, pour moi, ce n'était jamais le cas. Je ne peux pas comprendre de ce côté parce que je n'étais jamais dans cette situation. Alors, pour eux, peut-être que c'est different pour eux.*
>
> *It's necessary to say it. It's important that there be a French faculty in Alberta. It's important to have this community for the French language. If we're at the Faculté, we (French immersion students) do not think of identity and language as going together, they (the Francophones) think of identity as, "We are Francophones. There are Anglophones that surround us." ...Yes. I think that for them ...and I can say this...that for them...it's a little mixed up. Being a minority is part of their identity...but for me this has never been the case. I can't understand their side because I've never been in this type of situation.*

These comments show the type of difficulties encountered when two very different communities of affinity attempt to merge. Although the French immersion

students may want to understand the plotlines woven through the Francophone history (and many say they 'learned' about these in school), they simply don't have any experiences that would allow them to compare their own history to that of Francophones. The fact that the French immersion students are Anglophones and are in the majority at CSJ does make them a very real threat to Francophones. Being part of the English speaking majority allows for a certain taken-for-grantedness of one's position in regards to minority populations. The group in power does not always see the need to try to understand the feelings, views or beliefs of the minority group. In turn the minority group tries to keep the majority from exerting too much power over them when possible. The situation at Saint-Jean is a politically and culturally complex one, with at least two different and competing (hi)stories and plotlines at play within the same institution. The fact that the Francophone students are able to position the French immersion students as 'minorities', at least in regards to their linguistic abilities in French, puts the latter in the rare position at CSJ of walking in the shoes of the Other. Although they may not like this positioning, it is important that the reasons why it is happening be made explicit so that even if these conflicting histories can never be totally reconciled, they can at least be out in the open so the tensions between the two groups can be understood and addressed.

My 6th assumption

French immersion students need to perform in their coursework at the same level as their Francophone counterparts.

Because Joanne was quite proficient in French, she sometimes felt that French immersion students could perform in their university coursework at the same level as

Francophone students. She spoke about a required course that most students have difficulty with:

> *C'est la chose que tout le monde m'a dit. C'est pas juste les élèves d'immersion qui ont de la difficulté avec ce cours-là. Et c'est ça le problème. Je pense que parfois les élèves d'immersion à la fac se sentent « Ah, c'est trop difficile pour moi et ils [les professeurs] sont plus durs sur moi parce que je suis un élève d'immersion. » Je pense que c'est pas la bonne attitude. Alors, j'ai vraiment essayé d'aller contre cette attitude parce que je voulais juste dire à tout le monde « Non, c'est un cours difficile pour tout le monde et n'importe qui doit travailler fort. » Je pense que c'est mieux de ne pas faire cette séparation entre les deux. Le niveau qui est exigé est le même pour tout le monde.*
>
> *That's the thing that everybody says. It's not just the immersion students who have difficulty with that course. And that's the problem. I think sometimes the immersion students at the Fac feel, "Ah, it's too difficult for me and they [the professors] are harder on me because I'm an immersion student." I think that's not the right attitude. So I really tried to go against this attitude because I really just wanted to say to everyone, "No, it's a difficult course for everyone and anybody would have to work hard." I think it's best to not make this kind of separation between the two. The level that we must attain is the same for everyone.*

She also felt that perhaps the immersion students who were used to getting very good achievement scores in their former program, were not seeing their grades at CSJ realistically:

> *Ça sera intéressant de voir quels sont vraiment les taux de réussite dans ce cours et dans les autres cours, parce que je trouve que c'est aussi tous les étudiants qui viennent en éducation, en général, sont de bons étudiants. Et avant ils recevaient de très bonnes notes et peut-être c'est juste qu'ils ne sont pas habitués à travailler forts et avoir des notes plus basses...Dans certains cas, je pense que peut-être les gens exagèrent. Ils reçoivent des critiques de leurs professeurs et ils reçoivent une note un peu plus bas mais ce n'est pas la fin du monde. C'est juste que les attentes sont plus hautes. Ça serait intéressant de voir comment tous ces commentaires comparent avec le taux de réussite.*
>
> *It would be interesting to see what the actual levels of achievement are in this course and others because I find that in general, the students coming into education are good students. And before they received really good marks and maybe it's just that they're not used to working hard and getting lower marks...In certain cases, I think maybe people exaggerate. They get critiqued by their professors and they receive marks that are a little lower but it's not the end of the world. It's just that the expectations are higher. It would be interesting to see how these comments compare to the actual achievement levels.*

It must be remembered that Joanne was one of the most proficient students who graduated from a French immersion program. In fact, she was so proficient that she was often mistaken for a Francophone. As she said:

> *Parce que cette semaine j'étais à une école Francophone, faire une visite parce que le directeur était mon mentor. Alors, je suis allée là lui voir...mais tout le monde, tous les autres enseignants pensaient que j'étais Francophone.*
>
> *Because this week I went to visit a Francophone school because the principal is my mentor. So I went to see him...but everyone, all the other teachers thought that I was Francophone.*

I was very happy to have Joanne as a participant in this study because she demonstrated the possibility of French immersion students gaining a high level of proficiency in French. This being said, I do not think that she was necessarily representative of those students graduating from a French immersion program. Therefore while the expectations at CSJ may be appropriate for her, for the majority this may not be the case. Perhaps Joanne is right in saying, however, that it is difficult when students who were proficient in French immersion suddenly find themselves unable to reach the same levels of achievement regardless of the amount of work they put in. Tammy indicated this when she said:

> *Vous êtes dans la classe la plus haute du programme (immersion) alors pas besoin de faire des règles puis nana...la dans ma classe c'était*

subjonctif puis toutes les feuilles puis les vire-langues et comment dire ca ... comme c'est sur le dos d'un canard...puis les choses que chavaient pas.

You're in the highest class (in immersion) so no need to practice rules nana...there in my class it was subjunctive and all these practice sheets of tongue twisters and like how to say these...like it was water on a ducks back...and all the things I didn't know.

Although it seems there are students who have difficulty with some of the course work at CSJ, I didn't get the impression the participants in this study were overly upset about the level of difficulty of the work. They were more upset about their own emotional well being. For instance, Louise spoke about the same course that Joanne referred to above:

Le premier cours que j'ai pris en français c'est le ..um cours de dissertation... c'est pas la meilleur note (rire)...c'était pas ma meilleure note...mais j'ai appris beaucoup ...parce que c'était, « Oh my goodness..qu'est-ce que j'ai fait? » Oui c'était difficile et j'avais des des des sentiments – oh je devrais être avec mon garçon – et c'est vraiment tu rentres dans ce cours qui est si difficile et comme, « Wow, I don't want to do this! » Alors c'était vraiment comme ...mais j'ai (frappe des mains) passé...Oui c'est ça à un moment donné j'ai dit okay je veux passer ce cours parce que je ne veux pas REPRENDRE ce cours ....(rire) et alors c'est pas la meilleure note...quand même je dois pas le reprendre.

The first course I took was French um the course in essay writing...it wasn't the best mark (laughter)...it wasn't my best mark...but I learned a lot...because it was, "Oh my goodness..what will I do?" Yes it was very difficult especially because I had feelings of, "Oh I should be with my son – and it was really ...you go into that course that is so difficult and like, "Wow, I don't' want to do this!" So it was like...but I (claps hands) I passed...Yes it was at a certain point that I said okay I want to pass this course because I do not want to have to RETAKE it (laughter)...And so it wasn't the greatest mark but at least I don't have to retake it.

Overall, I have come away from the research interviews sensing that the French immersion students are not so much worried about the course work as they are about how they are perceived by their professors and the other students at CSJ. They are much more concerned about their lack of ability to communicate socially than they are about their academic work. This is likely because they consider themselves fairly proficient academically, but as I indicated in Chapter Five, many of them feel less than at ease linguistically at the social level.

My 7th assumption

French immersion students have a specific identity that can be named.

As I indicated when I began this study, I thought I would be able to assign a label to French immersion graduates in terms of their identity. I felt strongly that they could no longer be considered simply Anglophone after having spent 12 or 13 years learning French, but neither could they be considered Francophones. As I interviewed my

participants about questions of identity they began to strongly resist my attempts to pigeonhole them. In retrospect I think it was my desire to make things neat and tidy that motivated me to pursue a line of questioning that was not producing the answers I was looking for. I came to realize that their ambiguous identities irritated me, but in trying to pigeonhole them neatly, the study was becoming more about my needs than about their lived experiences. It was at this point that I let go and let them speak for themselves as Louise did here:

> *Les Francophones, ils parlent français. Les anglophones parlent l'anglais. Moi, je ne m'identifie pas avec la langue, je m'identifie comme personne qui a ses relations. Alors, il n'y a pas vraiment un mot qui peut m'identifier parce que le mot pour moi ne va pas être nécessairement le même mot pour Michel parce qu'il va avoir ses propres relations. J'aime la langue et c'est pour ça que j'ai appris le français. J'aime la langue anglaise aussi. Je suis tellement forte dans la langue anglaise. J'avais besoin d'un petit défi. Et c'est pour ça que mes parents ont décidé de me mettre dans une école d'immersion parce que j'avais besoin d'un défi... je savais lire...Alors, pour moi, ils m'ont mis dans l'immersion parce que, qu'est-ce qu'on va faire en maternelle si on sait déjà toutes les choses qu'on va enseigner en maternelle ? Pour moi, l'identité c'est comme une personne. Je suis la femme d'Ian. Je suis la mère de Michel. Je suis la fille de Brett et Carole. C'est ça mon identité. Je suis la belle fille de Harry et Rashida. Et toutes ces différences ça me fais moi. Alors, j'utilise le mot francophile parce que je peux parler en français avec n'importe qui*

dans n'importe quelle situation. Mais, pour moi, je suis une personne qui habite ici en Canada et, pour moi, c'est important. Il y a deux langues officielles de Canada et, pour moi, c'est un choix personnel si tu habites ... ici il faut apprendre les deux langues officielles du pays. Pour moi, c'est vraiment qu'il faut l'apprendre pour le respect. Juste pour le respect pour les autres Canadiens qui habitent ici avec nous autres.

The Francophones, they speak French. The Anglophones speak English. Me, I don't identify myself with a language, I identify myself like a person who has relationships. So there really isn't a word that could identify me because this word would likely not be the same one that one would use for Michel because he'll have his own relationships. I love the language and that's why I learned French. I love English too. I am so strong in the English language. I needed a little challenge. And that's why my parents decided to put me in an immersion school because I needed a challenge...I knew how to read...So for me they put me in immersion because what would I do in Kindergarten when I already knew everything that would be taught in Kindergarten? For me identity is like a person. I am Ian's wife. I am Michel's mother. I am Brett and Carole's daughter. That's my identity. I am Harry and Rashida's daughter-in-law. And all these differences – they make me me. So I use the word Francophile because I can speak French with anyone, in any situation. But for me, I am a person that lives in Canada and for me it's important. There are two official languages in Canada, and for me it's a personal choice – if you live here you need to

learn the two languages of the country. For me you need to learn French out of respect. Just to respect the other Canadians that live here with us.

Although she was willing to label herself with the term 'Francophile', she went on to place French on the same level as other languages that she was learning. In the end she admitted that it is still in English that she felt herself most at-ease.

Comme les chinois qui sont venus. Ce n'est pas de dire que je vais apprendre le chinois parce que, moi, je n'ai aucune relation avec les personnes chinoises. Alors, cet été, j'ai appris l'espagnol, parce que j'ai des relations avec des personnes espagnoles. Je vais apprendre le hindi parce que c'est la langue de mes beaux-parents. Alors, je peux avoir cette relation. Je peux le faire plus fort parce qu'on peut partager la langue et je vois que la langue c'est important pour partager. Mais ma personnalité en anglais est beaucoup plus fort qu'en français. Mais, ce n'est pas nécessairement que moi j'ai changé. C'est parce que je suis plus confortable. Je sais plus de mots, je sais différentes expressions en anglais qui ne traduisent pas en français.

Like the Chinese that have come. This doesn't mean that I'm going to learn Chinese because I don't have any relationships with Chinese people. So this summer, I learned Spanish because I have relationships with Spanish people. I want to learn Hindi because this is what my in-laws speak. So I can have this relationship. I can make it stronger because we can speak this language and I believe that language is important to share. But my personality is much stronger in English than in French. But this

doesn't mean that I have changed. It's just than I'm more comfortable. I know more words; I know different expressions in English that cannot be translated into French.

Joanne also differentiated herself from a Francophone identity by calling herself a Francophile, although she used the term a little ambiguously as she only just barely differentiated between Francophone and Francophile:

J'étais fière de partager avec les Québécois qu'il y a des Francophones qu'on appelle Francophiles ici, qui apprennent la langue même s'ils ne sont pas nés dans une famille Francophone. Je ne pense pas qu'ils se rendaient compte qu'il y avait autant que ça. Donc, c'était bien qu'on pourrait être là et aussi dire « Écoute, il y a des gens qui font le choix de vivre en français. J'étais fière de dire ça.

I was proud to share with the Quebecois that there are Francophones that we call Francophiles here that are learning the language even though they weren't born in a Francophone family. I don't think they realized that there are so many. So it was good that we were there and could say, "Listen, there are people who make the choice to live in French."

As I interviewed Joanne, I was constantly struck by her tendency to refer to other French immersion students as 'them', and to position herself closer to the Francophone identity as when she said:

Oui, ce sont les élèves d'immersion qui parlent moins en français. Je pense que c'est vrai. Ils se sentent moins à l'aise avec la langue. Ils se

sentent inconfortables. Ça m'arrive parfois. Je pense que je n'ai pas le vocabulaire pour dire ça. Mais je me suis dit au début de l'année que je vais me donner le défi de parler même si je ne sais vraiment pas ce que je veux dire parce que ou quoi que ce soit. Je m'améliorais en le faisant. Puis, ça arrive.

Yes it is the immersion students that speak less French. I think it's true. They feel less at ease with the language. They feel uncomfortable. It happens to me sometimes. I think that I don't have the vocabulary to say something. But I told myself at the beginning of the year that I will set myself the challenge to speak even if I'm really not sure how to say it or whatever. I will get better by doing it. And it happens...

However, Joanne clearly felt that being bilingual was most important to her:

C'est quelque chose de spécial de pouvoir être Canadien et parler les deux langues.

It's something special to be able to be Canadian and to have the two languages.

In conclusion, I feel that I was not being fair in trying to label French immersion students negatively. While it may have been neat and tidy for me as a researcher, it would have reflected the uniqueness of the French immersion students.

French Immersion Identity as the Pulsating 'Sphere of the Between'

I have come to understand that the 'identity' of French immersion graduates is not a static category that can be imposed on them as a group. Rather, the very nature of this identity is one that is constantly evolving, changing and 'in tension.' It is when French immersion students and their Francophone counterparts enter into true dialogue with each other that the second language students begin to stretch *who* they *were* as French immersion students (simply acquiring the French language) to ones *living* as French speakers in a Francophone community. In this sense, they never become Francophone themselves (nor do they want to) but they do begin to stretch themselves as French speakers and learners. In order to move in the direction of *otherness* requires that Francophones at Campus Saint-Jean be able to hold the tension between their Francophone uniqueness on the one hand and the nature of the "other" (less than fluent French speakers) in order to discover what contributions the French immersion students are making to the French language as a whole. I use the Venn diagram again in Figure 9 to show how engaging in a dialogical process with Francophone students can help French immersion students to expand their identity as French speakers and learners. This happens as they gain much needed practice in speaking with those more competent than themselves, although I believe this can only happen if they are able to use language socially. Figure 9 illustrates how by holding the tension with each other, a dialogical process can emerge whereby French immersion students can expand their identities as French speakers and learners.

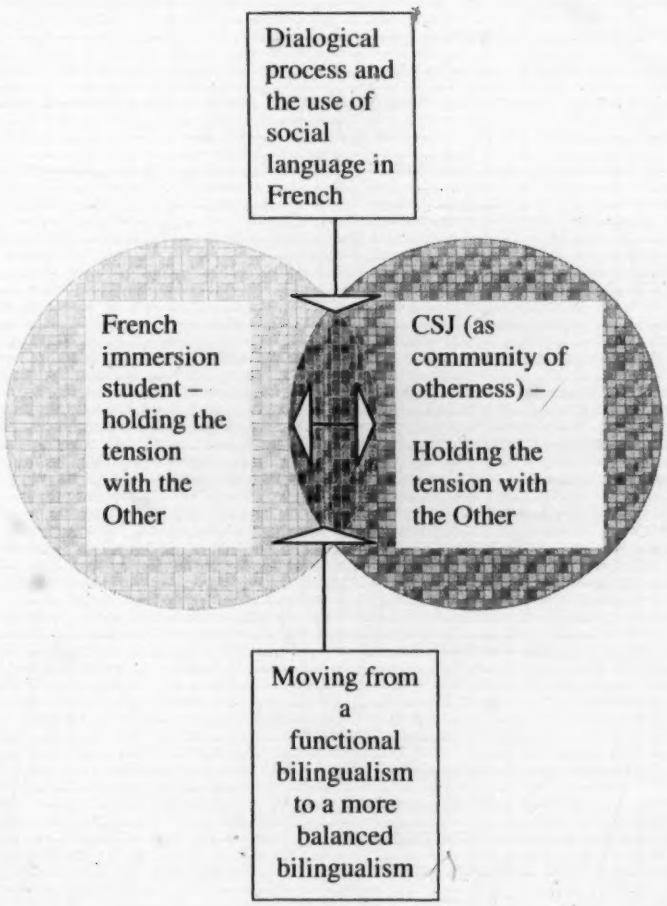
Dialogical process and the use of social language in French
French immersion student – holding the tension with the Other
CSJ (as community of otherness) –
Holding the tension with the Other
Moving from a functional bilingualism to a more balanced bilingualism

Figure 9

Creating the Sphere of the Between

Of course, holding this type of tension may not be easy, and as Friedman (1983) notes, "No group is able to confirm all otherness. That is beyond human capacity. But the test of a fellowship is the otherness that it can confirm" (p.136).

I will end this section with a quotation from Joanne, who expressed the deeply felt wish to engage in this type of dialogical relationship at CSJ:

> *Je pense aussi de faire des relations avec des gens à la Faculté. Ce n'est pas juste un bâtiment, c'est une relation avec les gens. Je pense que, pour moi, dans mon groupe d'amis, il y a beaucoup de gens qui viennent de différents endroits, des Francophones et des anglophones, et on s'entend très bien tous ensemble. Alors, peut-être ceux qui n'ont pas une grande variété dans leurs groupe d'amis peut-être qu'ils sont tous Francophones et ils pensent que 'l'autre' groupe n'a pas de racines. Mais si on passe du temps ensemble, on parle et on fait des relations, on sait que tout le monde vit en français à la Faculté et que tout le monde a le droit d'être là et qu'on crée une histoire ensemble.*
>
> *I think also about creating relationships with the people at the Faculté. It isn't just a building it's a relationship between the people. I think that for me, in my group of friends, there are lots of people that come from everywhere – Francophones and Anglophones and we get along well. So maybe for those that don't have this variety in their group of friends – maybe they're all Francophones and they think that the 'other' group doesn't have any roots. But it's only if we spend time with each other, we talk and we create relationships. Then we know that everyone lives in French at the Faculté and that everyone has a right to be there and that we are building a (hi)story together.*

CHAPTER NINE

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Much of what emerged in this study concerns the unproductive cycle that results when individuals take for granted the assumptions they have about others in the context of the Francophone and French immersion communities at CSJ. Entering into a dialogical relationship with each other can clarify assumptions and allow us to see the other more realistically. This is not an easy process as true dialogue takes time, effort and patience. In this chapter I will elaborate on four ways I believe dialogue can be facilitated between the Francophone and the French immersion populations at CSJ. The following recommendations may help CSJ move toward being a community of otherness, rather than remaining two distinct communities of affinity.

Recommendations

<u>The deliberate creation of spaces "in between" for dialogue to develop among groups of Francophone and French immersion students</u>

A recent study on students' experiences at the University of Alberta, entitled, "Student Engagement: A shared responsibility. Springboard Report of the Senate Task Force on Student Engagement" (December 2005), addresses many issues similar to those that emerged in this dissertation. The report states:

> Some focus group students expressed concern that the current academic culture does not support the merging of the academic and social aspects of learning. Encouraging all stakeholders to prioritize student engagement

> will bring together student social and academic worlds. Including student engagement within the Academic Plan may provide incentives to promote a more balanced learning environment. (University of Alberta Senate, 2005, p.9)

One of the consequences of French immersion students not feeling completely at-ease in using French as a social language is that they often spend only the time that is absolutely necessary on site at CSJ. This means that while they might be acquiring academic French language in their courses, they are making little headway with the social use of French. When French immersion students do not spend this 'social' time on campus, they lose the opportunity to use French to build relationships. Once again, *feeling unable to speak* leads the students to limit their time on site to the necessary class time, which then leads them to *even less practice* with the social dimension of the French language.

The fact that French immersion students do not remain on campus at times other than their scheduled classes is not unique to CSJ. A similar trend has been identified across all Faculties at the University of Alberta. As one student mentions in the Senate report:

> I don't have connections like that in classes and I would love to have them. Everyone is so isolated and individualistic. If the teachers could in any way initiate that, it would be awesome. – *2nd year undergraduate student.* (University of Alberta Senate, 2005, p.23)

And another student says:

> I live in Sherwood Park and I just feel completely like I come here to do a job. That's what it comes down to and I think that's what it is for a lot of people. Like we have a job to do and we come here and you get the job done and at the end of the day I go home – *1st year undergraduate student.* (p.19)

While this may not be similar to the experiences of all students at CSJ, the experiences of French immersion students are certainly exacerbated by their lack of proficiency in the use of social language when speaking French. When French immersion students or students who are not at ease in the language of the majority do not spend 'social time' on campus, it limits their opportunity to use language to build relationships. While one of the report's recommendations is to "increase social space on campus to enhance the informal learning environment and to improve opportunities for students to interact with other students" (p.4), CSJ has always striven to create a communal and cultural atmosphere amongst its student population. In regards to CSJ, the Senate Report notes that:

> The student lounge at Campus Saint-Jean was recently renovated, and this change has improved the student experience at Campus Saint-Jean. The new lounge provides a much-needed common area. According to student focus groups, involvement in extracurricular activities has helped bring Francophone and Anglophone students together, helping to promote a more inclusive environment at Campus Saint-Jean. Interviews with staff have indicated that it is important to have a place to go for a good cup of

> coffee and just to chat with students. (University of Alberta Senate, 2005, p. 20)

The report goes on to cite a student from CSJ as saying:

> The new student lounge has really improved student life… there are more people now that hang out there. The old one was like a ghost town. There was never anyone in the student lounge. So that's one thing I think they did that really helped. I hang out in the student lounge now and before I never did. I spent all the time in the library my first three years, and this year I actually like to go to the student lounge and hang out… – *Campus St. Jean student.* (p.20)

While renovating the student lounge has been a positive step, what is not mentioned is that there is a great deal of English spoken in this lounge.

How can the students be encouraged to escape from this cycle? Students cannot be forced to be on site and neither can they be forced to speak socially in French. External reinforcement is not usually very successful in situations such as these, although it may seem to be the only answer in the short term. I believe we must find ways to create an internal motivation in the French immersion students by first becoming aware of how intimidated they are when they are called on to speak in French to those more proficient in the language than themselves. Through the process of conducting this research, I have come to understand that the French immersion students fully understand that they <u>should</u> be speaking more French at CSJ but the reasons are not clear to them. Oftentimes the cycle is fueled and reinforced by a lack of understanding by the French immersion

students who find themselves simply speaking in English, feeling badly for doing so, but not having the tools to go about changing the situation. Instructors and administrators at the CSJ must continue to find ways of creating spaces 'in between' where all students can enter into dialogue with each other in order to reach a clearer understanding of the reality of the other.

Pedagogically, instructors at CSJ who teach both French immersion and Francophone students can begin to create dialogic spaces in their classes by encouraging students to openly discuss their differences. These types of discussions can help students better understand the situation of the other. It is important that instructors, who attempt to develop dialogical spaces in their classes, be prepared for the tensions that can arise when opening up these spaces. One possible way of mediating these tensions is for the instructor to ask students to write in a reflective journal (which creates another type of dialogical space between student and instructor) where they can express any frustrations they feel in regards to what was said or implied in class but to which they felt unable to respond. The instructor can then reply in writing to the student. Although an activity like journaling can help reduce tensions, it is important that the instructor not expect that these will completely disappear for the simple reason that a lived tension is an extrinsic part of the sphere of 'the between'. Instructors who are willing to create dialogical spaces in their classes and bring to the surface many of the assumptions students hold about each other (which does not happen in one class but rather as a running dialogue over the semester) may see more empathy between the two groups emerge over time. Also French immersion students may begin to understand how 'unsurfaced tensions' have led them to silence themselves when they are in classes with more proficient

speakers. Creating a climate of trust, where what French immersion students say is as important as how they say it, can not only help them gain in confidence but also bring them to transcend their feelings of vulnerability and incompetence in the L2.

Instructors who set out to create dialogical spaces in their classrooms must be prepared to give up a certain amount of control by taking on the role of facilitator rather than that of director. Encouraging students to speak honestly to each other can sometimes lead to things being said which inadvertently hurt other students (not that I believe this is done intentionally but simply because of the faulty assumptions some students may hold in regards to others); instructors who allow these assumptions to emerge and be discussed, can help students look at why they believe what they do about others, which in turn can help the whole class identify and reconsider many of their own assumptions. Instructors who can step aside in order to allow the space 'between' students to emerge, enables them to truly *see* each other, not as they imagine them to be – but how they *really* are.

Of course there are limits to creating these kinds of dialogical spaces in university classrooms. Instructors must maintain an appropriate balance between teaching subject matter and facilitating understanding and community building among their students. It is important that CSJ also find ways of creating dialogical spaces outside of the classroom. While there are fairly informal gatherings happening between students now (Campus meetings), it is not helpful, I believe, to gather students together to simply tell them there needs to be more French spoken at CSJ. When this happens French immersion students have a tendency to feel they are being pointed out by Francophones as the ones who are not speaking French at CSJ. While this may be true, a blaming attitude simply reinforces

French immersion students' tendency to avoid taking risks in French. Rather, I would recommend that these discussions be held in a *safe* space where students feel free to express themselves honestly; a space where they know they will not be judged for expressing their true thoughts. In order to ensure that everyone profit from these discussions, some instructors and administrators might want to participate in order to present their own experiences as French speakers. With enough good will and open dialogue amongst all stakeholders at CSJ, Francophone storylines can be woven into new storylines; constantly written and rewritten by the daily lived experiences of all those on the CSJ landscape.

Making explicit the difference between communities of affinity and communities of otherness

The need for dialogical spaces at the University of Alberta resonates throughout the recent Senate Report on Student Engagement. The importance of dialogue is ensconced within the very definition that the authors provide for the term engagement: "To engage is to draw a person into a conversation, to attract and hold fast a person's interest, and to take part in something" (University of Alberta Senate, p.3). In the report, the University of Alberta pledges to:

> support the creation of social cohort groups incorporating membership from different populations to increase understanding and cultural/social sharing in a diverse student body that includes local, rural, international, Aboriginal and special needs populations. (University of Alberta Senate, 2005, p. 14)

Although the word 'community' is mentioned again and again throughout the report, there is never any real deconstruction of the concept. For instance, the Senate committee uses the word "community" in some of the following ways:

- A community of learners
- The reputation of the university in the broader community
- The University of Alberta community.
- A creative community
- A community-wide vision
- The campus community
- Community leaders
- Community involvement.
- The alumni community

In this dissertation, I have shown the importance of making a distinction between communities constructed through affinity and communities based in otherness. Imagining how to help bring together two different groups like the French immersion students and the Francophones students at CSJ required that I try to understand how the two communities had been constructed quite differently. Identifying different constructions in any two groups can help everyone understand the tensions that can arise when people have very different understandings of language, norms, human bondedness and historical storylines. Using the term 'community' as it is used in the Senate Report gives the

impression that the word 'community' means the same thing, in all circumstances and that all communities are constructed in the same way.

As I have shown in this dissertation, it is important to explicitly differentiate between the two types of communities (communities of otherness and communities of affinity). Considering the many different groups that are called to co-exist on the larger university landscape, it is not enough to propose 'community building' without first making clear the types of community the university wants to build. Using the word 'community' in such a general way tends to gloss over just how difficult the process of bringing different groups together can be. True dialogue takes time, effort and patience. The findings in this dissertation can help all stakeholders at the University of Alberta better understand how communities are constructed and accept the fact that bringing different groups of people together will require that a certain amount of tension be tolerated. Aside from the need to better conceptualize the concept of community, I believe the Senate Report does have many valid recommendations that are worth pursuing.

Rethinking expectations for French immersion students and becoming conscious of their particular needs

I have come away from this study feeling that my participants would not want the institution to alter its expectations in regard to French immersion students. For the most part, I think the French immersion students are simply asking for a little more support and understanding in regards to the specific challenges they face as students coming from immersion programs rather than from Francophone ones. Louise suggested one way this might happen:

Peut-être si les profs donnaient plus de feedback positive... comme « Ça c'est une faiblesse, qu'est-ce qu'on peut faire pour combler cette faiblesse. »

Maybe if the profs gave more positive feedback...like saying, " This is a weakness, what can we do to improve on this?"

As noted earlier, Louise would have liked to be more prepared regarding the differing expectations of the French immersion program she went through and the expectations at the CSJ. All in all, I think that the French immersion students want to be treated with respect and have it known that they are strongly committed to keeping the French language alive even though their levels of competence in French might not yet be fully realized.

The French immersion students I have encountered are courageous, hard working, diligent and enthusiastic in regards to the French language. I think it would be a great shame if their enthusiasm was inadvertently dampened by judging them simply on their competence in the language.

Maintaining a sufficiently high Francophone population to ensure the continued Francophone identity of Campus Saint-Jean

All three participants agreed that there must be as high a percentage as possible of Francophone students at CSJ, not only to ensure the continued Francophone nature of the institution but to scaffold the second language students in their learning of French. Because many French immersion students are less proficient in French than their

Francophone counterparts, they need the experience of interacting with those more capable in the French language. As Joanne said:

> *Je pense que ça dépend de l'attitude des élèves, des étudiants. S'il y a beaucoup d'anglophones avec une bonne attitude qui veulent vraiment être là pour apprendre le français, ça va. Si leur attitude est moins bonne, peut-être ça peut nuire, Mais je trouve que c'est vraiment important toujours d'avoir des Francophones, d'avoir des gens qui viennent d'autre part pour vraiment enrichir l'expérience.*
>
> *I think it depends on the attitude of the students. If there are lots of Anglophones with a good attitude that really want to be here to learn French that's okay. If their attitude is less good, maybe it could hurt. But I think that it is very important that there always be Francophones, to have people that come from elsewhere to really enrich the experience.*

If there are not enough Francophones at CSJ, the institution risks being converted into a community of affinity – similar to the French immersion context the Anglophone students have come from. If this were to happen, the second language students would find themselves in the exact same constraining linguistic situation they recently exited. Entering a community where there is a sufficient "critical mass" of proficient French speakers gives second language learners access to dimensions of the French language that they would otherwise never get. This can only happen if the Francophone student is open to the reality of the French immersion student and is willing to engage him or her in social dialogue in French. This means accepting the fact that immersion students will make mistakes and that these are simply part and parcel of the French immersion

program's natural limitations. This will take patience and an effort on the part of the more proficient French speakers and courage on the part of the immersion students who must transcend their feelings of inadequacy when speaking French.

Significance of the Study

In 2001, at a conference entitled, "French for the Future," in Winnipeg Canada, his Excellency John Ralston Saul addressed this very issue when he criticized the business world as well as universities for not creating opportunities for minority francophone, French immersion and FSL students to use their second language once they graduate from high school. Speaking to a large group of French immersion and Francophone students living outside of Quebec, he stated,

> I think that our society is lagging behind in relation to what you have to offer…In truth at the university level, there has been little change relative to the dozens of thousands of students who graduate every year....There is much talk about the importance of opening up to the world. Universities and the private sector must understand therefore that a simple world where everything takes place in a single language corresponds neither to the Canadian reality, nor to the global reality. (Saul, 2001, n. p.)

While this is a valid statement, this study has shown that integrating the French immersion graduate into a Francophone post-secondary setting is a complex undertaking. The large influx of second language students to CSJ over a short period of time, has not allowed the institution to make the adjustments needed by such a radically changing population. It must also be understood that many professors who work at CSJ are not

familiar with the specifics of the French immersion or French Second Language programs. In fact it would be unrealistic to think that they would have this type of awareness as they are Francophones, working in a Francophone institution and not a second language institution. The findings of this study are important because they provide insights into the students' experiences that can help everyone at CSJ gain an understanding of the changing population, including the Francophone professoriate.

This study will add to the fairly limited amount of research that has been conducted with students who have graduated from French immersion programs and gone on to pursue post-secondary studies on a Francophone landscape such as that at CSJ. The study can help not only CSJ but all other institutions that are trying to make similar adjustments with little information on which to base important decisions. Qualitative studies such as this one, that present the actual experiences of those coming from second language programs and not just studies of 'what these students can or cannot do,' can help administrators and professors facilitate the immersion students' successful transition into the new community at CSJ. Perhaps, as Louise indicated, these changes need not be monumental but simply a more explicit mirroring of who these students are and what they are capable of doing in regards to the new Francophone context.

1. Social language. French immersion schools need to find ways to help their students communicate socially in French. This will not happen by 'telling' students to speak French. Students won't and they don't do that. Rather, ways must be found to help the students see that their lack of skills in using French in social situations will have real consequences. I believe it is the students' inability to enter into real relationships in the French language that cause them

to give up on French in the long run. There are high attrition rates in French immersion programs and a high percentage of those who graduate from immersion programs never go on to use their second language in a meaningful way (Mannavarayan, 2002). Being involved in purposeful, authentic dialogue with those more competent in the French language can help motivate students to commit to French in the long term. This does not simply require more oral activities in the classroom. It means finding ways of bringing students to places where French is lived authentically. Whether it is trips to Quebec, or as Louise suggested, trips to Francophone communities in Northern Alberta, more emphasis must be placed on developing the social language of French immersion students. As well, it must be made explicit that although difficult for some teachers, they must speak socially in French to their students (especially in the high school grades). This cannot be emphasized enough – high school is the crucial time when students either decide to continue their education in French or not. Creating strong relationships with their teachers can help students understand that social usage is the fuel that motivates individuals to pursue a language. If there is one thing this study has shown it is that second language students can successfully continue to learn in the French language but they stumble when it comes to trying to live in the French language. While French immersion schools can never truly replicate the Francophone experience, CSJ can make sustained efforts to create more spaces for French immersion students.

2. As this study has shown it is important that teachers, administrators and parents use caution when celebrating the successes of the French immersion students who complete a high school French immersion program. While it is important to be proud of them, students must not be given a false sense of their competencies as French learners. As indicated by the participants in this study, when French immersion students are told upon graduation from grade 12 that they are now bilingual or functionally bilingual, many equate this with a full bilingualism that even many Francophones in Alberta do not manage to attain. This misunderstanding can cause many difficulties for the students, not only at CSJ but when they travel to French speaking provinces or countries. It is a shock they would not receive if teachers and administrators in the French immersion programs painted a realistic picture of the students' proficiencies within the larger Francophone context. As the participants in this study expressed, they would rather know that they are not as proficient as their Francophone counterparts than be caught by surprise and made to feel inadequate once they find themselves amongst Francophones.

3. As for Francophone students at CSJ, it is important to understand the 'immersion' language, not as one that has been perfected but as one that is continually in the process of being learned. Francophone students must be made aware of the contributions they can make by being patient when listening to second language students speak. They can also help them learn more vernacular language and make the effort to seek them out in social situations.

4. Lastly, I believe that opening a space 'between' Francophone schools and institutions and French immersion programs can help to keep the French language alive and flourishing. French immersion students need to be seen as important assets to the French language and culture and not as Anglophones whose lack of proficiency might dilute the overall purity of the French language. The learning of French is a continuous process that is improved with hard work, courage and perseverance. The French immersion students whom I have met have all of this and more.

Future Directions for Research

While the data collected for this study were based on the recollections of three participants who had graduated from French immersion programs, there is a need for more studies like Tassone's (2001) that look at the actual lived experiences of French immersion students while they are still in the French immersion context. This research could be done using the community of affinity/otherness model in order to further understandings of particular French immersion schools and to explore whether they are closer to communities of affinity or of otherness, leading to a consideration of how a culture of otherness can be encouraged, if it is noticeably absent.

There is also a need to explore French immersion secondary teachers' perceptions of their students' level of oral competency and to explore whether or not they feel explicit instruction in the area of oral language (notably vernacular language) should be included in the L2 high school curriculum. It would also be important to look at how much French language elementary students use in comparison to those students in junior high and high school. In addition research is needed to understand the reasons why there may be a

decrease in L2 use once French immersion students reach secondary school. It would be beneficial to ask what the Francophone university can do to link with students who wish to pursue post-secondary studies in French in order to better prepare them for the reality of a native speaking institution. Another area of study might ask whether or not French immersion high school teachers in areas other than French take for granted that they need not teach the French language explicitly in these other subject areas.

Concluding Remarks

Before beginning this study, I, like many others at CSJ, had a tendency to place students from French immersion and other second language programs into one category and then make certain assumptions about them. I perceived the French immersion students (as a category) as something fixed and finished (Friedman, 1992); in other words, as an object or what Buber called the I-It relationship. Through the process of conducting this research I have come to understand French immersion students in their uniqueness – not as different per se – but as Friedman would say, that which "makes a person or thing of value in itself, that which is unrepeatable and for which no other value can be substituted, that which is not a matter of usefulness or function but, however much it may exist in relation to others, as a center in itself" (1983, p.9).

Striving to create a community of otherness at CSJ is an attainable goal if individuals can keep in mind that being grounded in tolerance, adjustment and compromise must be enacted through mutual confirmation. This confirmation can only occur when students and staff are brave enough to open up a dialogical space and enter into the sphere of the 'between' with the other. Ultimately, I hope that the arguments that I have presented in the study will allow those Francophones at CSJ to understand that

Anglophones coming from second language programs such as French immersion, and pursuing French at the postsecondary level, need to be considered as 'assets' in the larger Francophone struggle to keep the French language alive.

To conclude I offer a poem that I wrote to express what it is that makes me a Francophone – not so that French immersion students can compare themselves to me – but so that they can come to know me as I am, as I have come to know them as they are…

Le pantalon de mon grand-père

Il était vieux
Avec la peine de l`âge
Cheveux clairsemés et sans ouïe
Son dos courbé
Le rapetissait

Son pantalon préféré
Ne lui faisait plus
Seulement les bretelles
Le gardait suspendu

Au moment de sa mort
Tout ce que je voulais
Était ce vieux pantalon
Usé, de fermier

Mais lors de mon arrivée
Au bout de son cercueil
Le pantalon, il le portait
Bien repassé

Ce pantalon
Comme le tronc d`un vieil arbre
Allait l`aider
A bien s`enraciné

Au revoir à celui
Qui m`a aimé en français
Lorsque je jouais à ses pieds
La joue collée
À son vieux pantalon

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